

Joel 2:1-3 – Judah’s Day of Judgment: A Depressing Scene

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Armstrong, Henry, Geneva, Clarke, Calvin, Barnes, Handfuls, JFB, Poole, Trapp, Gill, INT, Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: **If someone were to say to you, “The scene of the accident was terrible,” you would have some idea of what it was like, but if he described in detail what he saw, it would make that accident come alive and evoke more response from you.** So if he said, **“The car was cut in two when it hit the lamp post, pieces of the car were 200 feet away, blood and glass and body parts everywhere, 2 ambulances, 3 fire trucks with the jaws of life, and 5 police cars...”** you would have a better idea, wouldn’t you?

Similarly, God gave a detailed description of a terrible day of judgment that was coming soon on the Jews. He wanted to make sure when they saw the scary picture of what would happen, they would work to avoid the terrible disasters. (God had to work harder to paint this picture of judgment as the Jews who were very dense. Luther said the Jews’ heads were like rocks!)

Our headings are:

The Blowing of the Trumpet

The Blackness of the Day

The Burning of the Land

Our goals are: **That you will develop a proper sense of the danger the church is in today and that you will work to lead her to repentance, restoration, and a resumption of her work on earth.**

The Blowing of the Trumpet

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:

1. God commanded Joel to blow the trumpet in Zion – the holy mountain of God – where God’s temple was.

Blowing the trumpet was a signal to **celebrate a special feast or for announcing war, and it was the work of the priests to do it.** But the priests were missing. Likely they went back to work because there was not sufficient support in the temple.

Numbers 10:8 "The **sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets**; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations. 9 "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.

2. Here, Joel ties the 2 purposes of the trumpet: There were no proper celebrations, so God was declared war on the Jews.

This was God’s war against his own people. The Babylonians would fight for him as his agents, his sword.

Unfortunately, at this point, the Jews were not afraid of God and his agents and **indulged themselves in lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.** They did not directly hate God, but **they loved themselves and their pleasures more.**

3. Sending his literal and military locusts on Judah was what God had threatened earlier if Israel became spiritually bankrupt and turned away from proper serving of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 28:42 "**Locusts shall consume all your trees** and the produce of your land. ^[60] "Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.

And this what God had actually did to the Israel (the 10 ½ tribes) just before this when the Assyrians came and conquered them.

Amos 3:6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? **If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?**

4. In order to avoid the real locusts and military locusts, God called the Jews (the 1 ½ remaining tribes) to tremble in fear.

When do people tremble in fear? **They tremble when they are afraid of what was likely to happen.**

The Jews should stand before God and tremble because they **were guilty of robbing him.**

5. Lessons:

a. If ministers aren’t provided for so they can sound the alarm, can count on God’s anger. God had ordained that minister be supported well so they could lead the worship and bring honor to his name. In many congregations, ministers have to work outside the church to supplement their income. How can Christians properly work for Jesus if they are not properly trained?

b. There is no time for self-indulgence when there is work to be done. The Lord is angry with his church! How can he not be! She has contempt for him. Which husband would be satisfied with a conceited wife? She needs to be salt and light!

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come **for judgment to begin at the house of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

The challenges we face today in Canada is not about China. **It is about you, Christians, and how you view life and worship.**

c. Is there any evidence this practice of gathering to fast and pray has been abrogated by God? No. Jesus himself said that people would have to fast and pray after he left. You should do it too. Churches are planning to fast next Sunday. Join us!

The Blackness of the Day

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.

1. Judah would experience a day of darkness when judgment finally hit them and the physical and military locusts came.

Darkness ... gloominess ... clouds ... thick darkness...describe the intensity of the troubles. And, in fact, physical locusts could be in swarms of billions and completely block out the midday sun and make it very dark as night.

Look at how it was when the locusts came over Egypt...

Exodus 10:15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

What about the military locusts – the Babylonians? They would bring emotional darkness on the land when they ravaged it. The Jews would be left without hope – totally devastated.

2. This darkness (judgment) would come unexpectedly and be as unstoppable as the morning sunlight.

No one can really predict the moment the sun breaks through in the morning and surely no one can stop the sun from rising. Similarly, no one would be able to predict the suddenness of the arrival of the whips of God – physical and military locusts, and no one could stop them.

3. The Babylonians, would be a great and strong force and do much damage to the people of God.

How strong were they? There was never a nation like this before and there wouldn't be one like they after! Even in the future, there would be none like the Babylonians. This is why Babylon was called the golden empire by Daniel. Neither the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, nor the Romans could match this empire.

4. Lessons:

a. You don't have to wait for God to strike before responding in repentance. Listen to his warnings! **God will use all kinds of means (dictators, disasters, diseases) to discipline his church and no one can stop them!** For individuals, he could use **divorce or death, depression, car accidents, or a host of other things!** Learn! Get your life right with him. Learn what you should do, and do it. Don't be stubborn like Egypt who had to learn the hard way. And remember, you have less excuse as you know more. You've seen what God did in the past!

b. Simply put: When you hear God's threats, petition his pardon. That is the only wise thing.

The burning of the Land

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.

1. Babylon, the military locusts, would totally devour Judah as fire devours dry lands.

Babylon did come with literal and figurative flames. They burned Jerusalem when they came in. When they left, they left flames behind...just as God said...And they destroyed Judah's future!

Physical locusts which came, because they eat everything in sight, were described as scorching the land!

2. Before this awful time, when Israel was in the desert, God provided a light to shine for them at night and a wall of fire which served as a protection from their enemies, but not anymore!

3. Further, the land that looked like the Garden of Eden to the Jews, a land that supplied all their needs and wants, a land that had been given to them by God as a gift, would be totally destroyed, all by the work of God, though his Babylonian torch.

Surely you will think of another place that had well-watered land and was productive and fruitful, which God destroyed with fire and brimstone! That was Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 13:10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

There was no reason to keep the land if righteousness had departed! God had to burn them with fire.

Fire was God's cleansing agent.

Psalms 97:3 A fire goes before Him, And burns up His enemies round about.

Isaiah 66:15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many.

This is the same judgment that will come on the world and the end of times.

Matthew 13: 49 "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and **cast them into the furnace of fire.** There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

With all this fire, God was giving the Jews a message as to what he would do!

Psalms 107:34 A fruitful land into barrenness, For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

4. God would then leave the Jews desolate and no one would be able to escape.

5. Lessons:

a. Don't be blind to the judgments of God. God can't be pleased by what he sees today.

b. Don't boast about your cash or your cars, your reputation or your RRSP's; the Lord can destroy them all in an instant if they become your gods...if they become the focus of your life.

c. When mild punishments don't work, the Lord uses severer punishment. He will do so to protect his good name. He will do so to punish his children. He will do so to put out pretenders from his flock.

d. There is always hope with God. Consider his promises to those who would return after captivity.

Ezekiel 36:26 "I will **give you a new heart** and put a **new spirit within you**; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 35 "So they will say, '**This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden**; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'

Isaiah 51:3 For the LORD will **comfort Zion**, He will comfort all her waste places; He will **make her wilderness like Eden**, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; **Joy and gladness will be found in it**, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Isn't God a loving God? He had no reason to do this, but he did anyway! **He will restore Eden!** He will restore joy and gladness. And ultimately, there is heaven...that perfect Eden!

Conclusion:

Locusts, armies, darkness, and fires - they all refer to the same thing: The judgment God was bringing on the Judah. God said these things so they would repent and not be destroyed.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. No one can free the church from God's judgment – not Teresa Tam, not Doug Ford, not WHO. Only God can remove his judgment. For God to remove his judgment you must placate his anger!

2. You can't placate him with your good works or by giving money to the church. You can't placate him with **fake unspiritual worship**. You can only placate him if you **come in humility with the blood of Jesus Christ** in your hands and say: Lord, **we have sinned against you.** **We have loved ourselves and pushed you aside.** Come back on the throne of our hearts and our churches. Let us live our lives to glorify you!

3. You must also challenge other Christians to repent. Let them know God is waiting! Yes, join with them and call on God to forgive...and then show that forgiveness by loving Jesus and living for him.

Finally, God punishes his children because he loves them, but if you are not his child, God will destroy you in hell forever because you hate him. If you don't want to go to hell, learn how God shows love to his enemies. Read his Word. Learn how Jesus died in the place of sinners and learn that God can count his death as yours, if you ask!