

Joel 3:1-8 – God Takes Revenge on His People’s Enemies

TSK, Hebrew Lexicon, Handfuls, Henry, Clarke, JFB, Armstrong, Expositor, Clarke, Poole, Gill, Young, Trapp, Calvin, INT, Geneva, Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: You’ve probably heard the saying, “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” It simply means revenge is more satisfying if it does not come immediately. But for the Covenant people who had suffered for 70 years, it seemed vengeance was taking too long. They wondered how long they would have to **wait to return to Jerusalem**, when would they be **able to rebuild the temple**, when would they **be able to restore worship**, and when would they be **able to get ready for the church to expand!** When would the Babylonians be destroyed? You see this yearning is Psalms 137.

They knew vengeance wasn’t theirs. Vengeance was the Lord’s. They knew also **they had to wait on God’s timing.** And they knew they had to **continue to trust God and live godly lives, even as they waited** for God to destroy their enemies.

God taking revenge on his enemies is the subject today.

Our headings are:

The Return of the Redeemed

The Revenge on the Ravagers

The Results of Redemption

Our goals are: **You will wait for and pray for God to take revenge on his enemies, even while you forge ahead with the spread of the church through faithful preaching of God’s Word.**

The Return of the Redeemed

1 "For behold, in those days and at that time, **when I bring back the captives** of Judah and Jerusalem, **1. Joel wrote before Jerusalem had even gone into captivity, and yet the Lord was talking about when he would bring them out.**

(This shows with absolute certainty God **was the one who controlled the future.**) God made that promise multiple times to multiple prophets. Here is one example.

Jeremiah 30:3 ‘For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that **I will bring back from captivity** My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And **I will cause them to return to the land** that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’” **18** "Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; The city shall be built upon its own mound, And the palace shall remain according to its own plan. 19 Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry; **I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.**

2. The Bible and historical records confirm Judah did go into captivity in Babylon (and some people were spread in other parts of the Babylonian Empire), from about 605BC, for almost 70 years, and they did come out, just as God said!

We use 586BC date for the destruction of Jerusalem because that was when the city was totally destroyed, but the educated and important people were taken in 605BC. Around 537-538, the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and set the Jews free.

3. Lessons:

a. God punishes his children when they stray from following him. He loves them enough to do this.

b. God keeps his promises and never abandons his children. He is not a “half-redeemer,” but he is a full Redeemer.

The Revenge on the Ravagers

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. 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.**

1. God the gave details of what he would do to the nations that worked for the destruction of the Jews.

Jeremiah 30:20 Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me; And **I will punish all who oppress them.**

Yes, God wanted the Jews punished, for they had grievously sinned, but he would punish the nations that targeted his people. (Nobody wants his neighbor to discipline his children.)

2. God would set up the scene of a court to examine and punish those who hurt his people.

He would bring the Babylonians down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. What does that mean? There is no such place as the Valley of Jehoshaphat? **Jehoshaphat means “God of judgment.” So the Babylonians would be examined and judged.**

But there is something that is interesting from the time Jehoshaphat was king. He defeated Sennacherib’s army in a

valley (so maybe this was a reference). God passed judgment on the Assyrians there and protected his people.

Later, God would bring judgment on the Romans and Jews who conspired against God's people, and in doing so, save his people.

How precious God's people are to him! They were his "heritage." He would ultimately keep them safe.

Revelation 13:10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; **he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**

God's people simply had to be patient and wait for God's justice.

3. God would then review the charges against Babylon.

They had scattered God's people everywhere, even in foreign nations.

Deuteronomy 28:64 "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known..."

They divided up Judah's land...even opening the Jews to Tyre and other countries to capture them. Captured Jews were put into groups and then lots were cast to see who would get which groups of people as their property.

Nahum 3:10 Yet she was carried away, She went into captivity; **Her young children also were dashed to pieces At the head of every street;** They **cast lots for her honorable men,** And all her great men were bound in chains.

The Babylonians treated the Jews as cheap...even selling a child for a prostitute's visit, and selling a young girl for wine.

So the Babylonians had no regard for their persons, their property, or the pride of God's people. How this must have hurt God's people! But these were the consequences of sin.

4. God promised he would conquer his people's enemies and bring back the "apple of his eye."

There is an important spiritual application here. In the same way, but fuller, Jesus would conquer the people's greatest enemy, Satan, save them, and then give his people gifts so their lives would be easier, just as the conquering king did!

Psalms 68:18 You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there.

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. But why does God highlight Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia if Babylon were the ravagers of God's people?

These were the smaller nearby nations who had taken advantage of the time the Jews were in captivity. God didn't do anything to these nations but they abused God's people. History records there was a discounted price for these Jewish slaves sold to the Tyrians, Sidonians, and Philistines, as they did not have to be transported from far away.

Ezekiel 26:2 "Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.'

These nations would therefore not escape judgment. God would come swiftly to destroy them. Who could retaliate against God and win? The Edomite laughed when Judah was taken captive...and even laughing brought them God's judgment.

Obadiah 1:15 "For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; **As you have done,** it shall be done to you; **Your reprisal shall return 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.**

6. What specifically were the sins of the Babylonians?

a. They robbed God of his worship. Specifically, they took away the things used in worship- the silver and gold vessels and the equipment used for worship. (Belshazzar later misused them!)

Daniel 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with **some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god;** and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

There is nothing God hates more than those who pollute, corrupt, or avoid his worship.

b. They sold God's people as slaves to foreigners. The word "Greeks" was used to represent many foreign nations. And **they did this with the intention the Jews would never return to their land and worship.** So this was a fight against God.

Ezekiel 27:13 "Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders. They bartered human lives and vessels of bronze for your merchandise.

7. Lessons:

a. The world will never stop persecuting God's people. The serpent did this from the beginning. That is his work today.

b. Those who oppress the weak and helpless, especially if they are named with the name of God, will have to answer to

him for their actions. His vengeance is real and unstoppable. He will tolerate no abuse of the *apple of his eye*...

Matthew 25:45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.**'

So those who step on the smallest toe of Christ's bride will have to give an account to him.

c. The trial and condemnation of the wicked nations would give the Jews hope as they resumed serving God.

Psalms 41:12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, And **set me before Your face forever.**

Isaiah 49:16 See, **I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;** Your walls are continually before Me.

d. Work with the Sword of the Spirit to make the world into the people of God. Bring in the Jews, the Israelites, and the all Gentile nations. Send or take the Gospel.

The Result of Redemption

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.

1. Cyrus the Persians and Alexander the Greek were 2 of the first men to set the Jews free from captivity in Persia and Greece.

When Alexander the Great captured Tyre, he set the Jewish people free.

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."

2. Part of God's retaliation on the head of the ones who bought and sold God's covenant children was to sell their children to far away places.

Psalms 49:14...The **upright shall have dominion** over them in the morning; And their **beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.**

Through Alexander the Great, God would send the Jewish enemies' children to the Sabeans who lived very far away in Arabia, to the "ends of the earth." (This is figurative language. Jews were not to trade in people. God did not leave heaven to come and sell his people's persecutors.) God allowed the Medes, Persians and Greeks do this work for him and his people.

3. And the Lord declared this, showing no one could stop it from happening!

4. Lessons:

a. God knows where his people are at all times. Even when you stray...or are suffering. He will find you and bring you out.

b. God's vengeance is sure because God is just. He character is just. Pray for vengeance. Sing of vengeance.

c. The wicked think a delay in judgment is the absence of judgment, but they are deceiving themselves. That may be true for man, but not for God. Wait for God's vengeance.

Conclusion:

The Jews had to **trust God that he would bring vengeance of their enemies** at a time he determined. And they had to **trust God** that he would then **redeem them from their captivity**, take them back to Jerusalem, and help them **rebuild the temple, restore worship, and ready themselves for the spread of the Gospel kingdom.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. No one escapes punishment for hurting or mocking God's people. No one! That is a warning to the wicked. More, it is the duty of all men, not only not to punish, but to protect God's people!

2. Wait for God's justice. Don't rush it. Don't "help out" God! Let him heap coals on the heads of the wicked.

3. Don't let trials of this life stop you for living for and advocating for your Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you will face the same fate as the Babylonians, except death would only be the initial punishment. You will be transported to hell and suffer there for eternity. Your only hope is to switch sides-from being a servant of the Devil to being a child of God. For this to happen, sincerely ask God to change sides! Adoption is free for you...though it cost Jesus his life.