

One of my bad habits is that I love to read a little bit of the end of a book. At least when it is a novel or story. I don't read much, but I just like to look at the last sentence. It is like a sneak peak and a small taste. I just want a hint for how the ending will come. I may already know the book will end good, but what kind of good? It's fun to try and piece together what the end will be based on a small glimpse.

Joel chapter 3 is a little bit like that. We are getting a sneak peak to the end of the story. This chapter is about the final day of the Lord. This is the last Day when Christ will return physically to judge the wicked and reward the righteous. The heavens and earth are made new. We don't know a lot, but this chapter gives us a little peak. Not all of it will make sense, but we might learn more than we might think.

### **I. The Final day of the Lord brings justice (v. 1-8).**

Verse 1, **"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,"**

The first verse tells us when this day of the Lord will be. At least it kind of does. It will be in the days of restoring Judah and Jerusalem. In those days is when all of this will take place.

That is ambiguous.

Most of Joel is ambiguous as to when these days will take place.

Pentecost is the only time we know for sure.

But I do not think this is a moment and time after Israel returned to the promised land.

This is not just after they came back from Babylon and Nehemiah's wall.

It appears to be pointing towards the final restoration of God's people.

Which we do not know when it will be.

But we do know what God will do in those days.

Verse 2, **"I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel,"**

This is why I think it is that last day.  
All of the nations are being gathered together to this valley.  
And in this valley once they are gathered, there will be judgment.  
That sounds eschatological to me.  
It sounds like what God will do in the final days.  
Because every nation is being brought into this singular place for judgment.  
It will all happen at once.

**“because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, <sup>3</sup> and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.”**

Something you should notice in the prophets.  
Pay attention to what they accuse other nations of doing.  
When the prophets are rebuking Israel for sin it is usually specific.  
They call out Israel’s idolatry.  
They call out Israel’s failure to follow the covenant and the laws of God.  
Sometimes it is because they are following the laws with their bodies but not their hearts.

But it is different when the prophets are rebuking other nations.  
Other nations are not rebuked for their failure to follow God’s laws.  
They are not even usually rebuked for their idolatry.  
Instead, they are rebuked and judged based on how they treat people and nations.  
This is especially true of how they treat Israel.

And sometimes this gets conflated with foreign policy today.  
This is not just about whether or not nations should support Israel.  
And that countries today support and bless Israel then they will be blessed.  
In studying this passage this week, I saw pastors try to say this is what the passage is doing.

Because that is not what the prophets do.  
That is not looking close enough at what they say.

Because they nations are judged for when they think they can abuse Israel.  
They are judged for when they commit atrocities against the people of God.

Even when God uses other nations like Babylon and Assyria to judge Israel, God returns and punishes those nations as well.

This is what happens here.

And Joel does this.

He points out in verse 3 how they have treated people.

They have cast lots for people.

They are selling children to buy time with a prostitute.

They are selling young girls for wine.

Children are being traded for pleasure.

And they will be judged.

Not because they sinned against the Jewish people,

But because they have violated people made in the image of God.

They will be held accountable to God for this abuse.

He will answer it.

Verse 4, **"What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily."**

These are not the countries you would expect to be mentioned first.

The Philistines only troubled Israel early in their history.

We would expect God to mention the Babylonians or the Assyrians.

But they do not get mentioned at all.

Instead, these countries are mentioned.

Now we would get sidetracked if we started trying to pinpoint when exactly this took place.

Or if we started trying to figure out if this was a previous judgment or maybe Joel took place in the early days of Israel's history.

Because the point seems to be that all the nations will be gathered.

It is not just the main nations, not just these three.

It is all of them.

Even the smallest.

Even the ones you would not think of.

Even the nations that no longer exist.

They will all come down to the valley for judgment.

Verse 5, **"For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples."**

This seems to be about those who have stolen from Israel.

Especially those who have robbed the temple of God.

Who took what was dedicated to God and they used it for idols.

But it is not just that they stole money from God.

Verse 6, **"You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border."**

Ultimately, it is about how they treated people.

They stole the prize of God's eye, human beings made in His image.

And they took them from the promised land.

Away from where God has worked so many miracles.

Away from where generations of people since Abraham have lived.

And sent them to a foreign land.

Verse 7, **"Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head. <sup>8</sup> 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 nation far away, for the Lord has spoken."**

What is God saying here?

First, God is saying that He will bring His people back.

He will undo the evil that they have done.

Not only is He going to undo this evil.  
He is going to reverse it against them.

This is why God says the payment will return to their own head.  
God says they will be sold to Israel and their children sold to far away nations.

This may or may not have come literally true in Joel's day.  
But the emphasis Joel is making is not that their children will be enslaved.  
The emphasis is that justice will come to them.  
They will experience the evil they have done to others.  
God will punish them greatly and it will be just.

The focus here seems to be on judgment and justice.  
God is bringing back on the wicked what they deserve.  
What they have done to others will be done to them.

This would bring comfort to Israel and it should bring comfort to us.  
One thing I notice is that it is only privileged people who tend to have a problem with the judgment of God.  
It is the people in ivory towers, with big homes, running water, and plenty of money in the bank account who think the idea of hell and punishment is cruel.

It is rarely the people in poverty.  
Ask the child growing up in a refugee camp.  
Ask the victim of sexual violence.  
Ask the one who had all the owned stolen from them.  
Ask those people what they think of judgment.  
If the idea of punishment for the dead and wicked seems outdated.

No, because they have been wronged and they long for justice.  
The final day of the Lord.  
The day of His judgment and justice should bring comfort to the righteous.  
Not because we want people we hate to be punished.

But because we want justice to be done.  
Think of Noah Presgrove.  
A young man killed in our community and no one knows what happened.  
No one talks and no justice has come.  
One day God will bring justice.  
Murders and conspirators will all face judgment.

The judgment of God should bring us comfort.  
This would be comforting message to Israel who is facing the worst locust  
famine and the worst army they have ever seen.  
It would be comforting to know that they are not the only ones who will be  
punished.  
That God will judge the other nations.

This should bring us comfort in our lives.  
When you see powerful politicians see like they are getting away with evil,  
know the day of the Lord is coming.  
When you see dictators oppress and destroy their people, know the day of  
the Lord is coming.  
When you see someone be declared guilty in a court room here even  
though you know they are guilty, know the Day of the Lord is coming.  
When you see the wicked go free, know the Day of the Lord is coming.

Be comforted.  
Because no one will escape God's justice.  
But the coming of this day should not just fill us with comfort.  
It should warn us and push us to make a decision.  
We have to decide how we will face and prepare for that day.

## **II. The Final day of the Lord demands a decision (v. 9-16).**

The primary decision is whether or not we will put our faith in Christ.

Verse 9, **"Proclaim this among the nations: Consecrate for war; stir up  
the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up."**

There is a proclamation of this day.  
God tells them to prepare for it.  
To tell everyone to come.  
Let all of the mighty warriors come.  
Let all of the nations bring their fiercest armies.  
Stir up the military industrial complex.  
Bring every single thing you have.  
Let them all come down and bring your best shot at God.

Verse 10, **"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am a warrior.'"**

this is where it becomes clear God is mocking them.  
It is actually a reversal too of eschatological implications.  
God does not tell them to turn their weapons into plowshares.  
Here He tells them to make weapons.  
And even bring the weakest.  
Take all of the small people, like me who faint at the sight of blood.  
Give them some makeshift weapons and have them all come down.  
Let them declare their might.

Verse 11, **"Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord."**

He tells them to hurry up.  
Let all of the nations come on down.  
They can bring down all the warriors they have.  
Because this is going to be a big gathering.

Verse 12, **"Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations."**

They need to stir themselves up and come to this valley.  
Because here in this place is God sitting down to judge.  
And He will judge them all.

First, we should note this gathering takes place in a valley.  
Valleys are usually where great battles take place.  
Normally these nations would be coming with all of their warriors to fight.  
So part of this is God messing with expectations.  
All of the armies come like they normally would for battle.  
But they will not be able to put up a fight.  
And they instead will be judged by God.  
This is the place God is gathering the nations.

The word Jehoshaphat is not just a name.  
Jehoshaphat was one of the kings of Judah after the civil war.  
He was one of the better kings relatively.  
But the word means, "YWH judges."  
Which is a fitting name for this valley.  
It will be the valley of YWH's judgment.

Now where is this valley?

We do not know.

It is not clear that any valley in Israel was named this originally.

Most scholars seem to believe it is the valley Jezreel, which is mentioned in Revelation 16 as the place of final judgment.

I think that fits and is the most likely.

But I don't think Joel knew what valley it was specifically when he prophesied it.

When we will find out when we get there.

No one is going to get lost and would they miss out.

You notice twice it mentions that God is going to judge "the surrounding nations."

This mostly points to the nations around Israel.

Those who have been close by.

Those who have been her neighbors and who have wronged her.

But I do not think this means that no other nations will be judged.



It is not as if Christians believe God will only judge the surrounding nations and all of the other nations get a free pass to sin and wickedness. So, even if Joel is only envisioning a smaller judgment, It is at least a sign and foreshadowing of a greater judgment to come.

Verse 13, **"Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great."**

This picture seems strange at first. He is using the image of a ripe harvest in a vineyard. The harvest is ripe and all of the grapes are fat. The winepress is totally full and all of the vats are overflowing.

But this is symbolic of the wickedness of the nations. Their sins are like grapes. And they keep growing and growing and bearing fruit. **"Their evil is great"**

And so now God is coming to harvest. In His grace, He has allowed their wickedness to continue. And every moment His judgment is delayed is a chance to repent and stop.

But the evil is too much now. It is time for judgment. Christ is coming to tread on the winepress.

There is some irony in the imagery as well. Most of the prophecies about harvests so far have been devastating ones. The locusts have eaten everything and the wineries are empty. The literal harvests are gone. Instead it is a harvest of sin and wickedness.

Verse 14, **"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."**

The word decision here is actually not referring to our decision. It is not that this is the valley where every nation and person decides what they think and believe. It might be better to translate it "verdict."

Sometimes I hear evangelists use this verse or image. But this is not about evangelism. It is past the time to decide. The people have already made their decision. Now they are going to hear the verdict of God.

And this day is near.  
It is coming soon.  
How will people respond?

Verse 15, **"The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining."**

The imagery is of total darkness. He has used the image a couple times in the book. It happens again here. The sun and moon disappear. All of the stars seem to get a little dimmer. Because this is the day of judgment. I also think it is darker because of the splendor of God's glory. It overshadows every other would be light.

Verse 16, **"The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake."**

God roars from His holy mountain. His voice comes out of Jerusalem. Because that is the city of His temple. That is the place God's presence has been. So it is coming out of Holy of Holies. The voice declares from behind the curtain.

The heavens and earth are quaking.  
His voice is so great and loud that the earth itself shakes.  
It might be what makes the sun stop shining.  
The nations and Israel made have ignored His voice.  
Israel may have not listened to the voice of the prophets.  
But they will listen now.  
They will listen on this day.  
The voice of God will not be ignored.  
It shakes the foundations of the earth.  
It is the voice that brings the nations to their knees.  
No one can hear this voice and have any doubt that this is the true and only God.

**"But the Lord is a refuge to his people,  
a stronghold to the people of Israel."**

This is the ending place.  
I mentioned it last week.  
God always ties judgment and mercy together.  
There will be justice and judgment.  
But there is a refuge and grace.  
There is an escape.  
There is a way for the verdict to be not guilty.  
You have to come to Jesus and God for refuge.  
God will be a refuge to His people.  
His place is the stronghold where we can be safe.

If we want to be safe.  
We have to come to the refuge.  
We have to come to Christ.  
The Jesus who calms the winds and the waves.  
The Christ who created the light in the darkness.  
The God who brought life into a world of emptiness and chaos.  
And we must decide before that day.  
Because after that day it is too late.

We can either worship Christ freely with joy now,  
Or we will bow in fear and terror on that one.

### **III. The final day of the Lord brings restoration (v. 17-21).**

This day will be a day when God makes all things right.  
God is not simply coming to punish the wicked.  
He will put all things back to how they should be.  
All sad things will come untrue.

Verse 17, **"So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it."**

After this day, everyone will know who God is.  
We have been studying Exodus on Wednesday night.  
We saw God say something similar after the plagues in Egypt.  
He told Pharaoh that He would do these things so that Pharaoh would know who God was.

Many mock Jesus.  
They use His name as a curse.  
They belittle His work on the cross.  
They blasphemy against Him.  
One day they will know who He is.

And one day we will know.  
We will see the face of the one we love.  
We will know that the God we have worshipped for our lives is truly God.  
It will no longer be faith and hope.  
It will be reality.

And we will see Him on His holy mountain.  
The place of Jerusalem will be holy.  
And no strangers will pass through it.

Jerusalem is a place with plenty strangers.  
It is disputed and fought over.  
The Jews and the Muslims argue and fight.  
They negotiate which areas the other is allowed in.  
But no more.  
Now Jesus will own it all. No one can take them away.

Verse 18, **"And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim."**

This is a beautiful image.  
It is the promised land as it was promised to be.  
Finally we will all get to see it.

There can only be restoration and peace when sin is no more.  
The new heavens and the new earth would not be so.  
Heaven would not be glorious if sin was allowed to remain.  
Or if the wicked were still allowed a small corner.  
Sin is like a cancer and disease.  
There cannot be just a little left, because it will grow and fester until it corrupts everything.  
This is why the restoration has a positive and negative aspect.  
The good is being restored to what it should have been.  
And the disease and stain of sin is being removed.

Verse 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."**

Part of the restoration is God dealing with sin.  
God will be restoring Eden.  
The land of God will be taken back to what it should have been.  
The land of sin and wickedness will not.

And this is an act of justice and restoration.

There are times we ask and wonder why God allows the wicked to prosper now.

Why do evil men become billionaires and have everything?

Why are tyrants allowed to have an empire and run nations?

Well, one day they will be dealt with.

They will no longer prosper but will become a desolation.

Their lands will be gone and destroyed.

There will be nothing in Egypt but a river.

Edom will not be filled with wicked cities, but it will be a beautiful wilderness.

Why does God do this to them?

Because of their violence.

This is justice and it is what they deserve.

These lands shed innocent blood.

Egypt was a place that threw babies in the river.

It was a land of brutal slavery.

Edom refused to let the slaves of Egypt pass through their land.

And they raided and destroyed Israel after Babylon had destroyed them.

So these lands will face judgment.

They will be no more.

Verse 20, **"But Judah shall be inhabited forever,  
and Jerusalem to all generations."**

This is showing the contrast between Judah and the other nations.

It is not about trying to explain the judgment of God.

It is saying, these evil places will not last.

But God's people will.

Their nation will be inhabited forever.

They will always continue to exist.

And this is a big deal.

This would have been a meaningful promise for Israel.  
They have continually fought for their existence.  
They have had to struggle to stay alive since the time of Abraham.  
They have been exiled and kicked out the of land multiple times.  
They wondered if they would ever get to go back.  
This is the promise of God to keep them there forever.

And this is not just about the city of Jerusalem and Egypt.  
It is not just a national promise to Israel.  
Now is it only a warning to Egypt and Edom and it means countries like  
North Korea and Russia will be exempt.  
This is the promise that God's people will be restored.  
They will be protected and live forever.  
And the wicked nations of sinners will fade.  
Anywhere that sin has reigned, it will be cast out.

Verse 21, **"I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion."**

This again is God promises to deal with it.  
Because He has not yet.  
The blood of the innocent cries out to God.  
It started crying out when Abel was murdered.  
And the blood of every death cries out to God.  
The blood of every one murdered.  
The blood of every innocent killed in unjust wars.  
The blood of the executed who were not guilty.  
And their blood will be avenged.  
One day God will do this.

Because **the Lord dwells in Zion.**

This means God is on the throne.  
This is our promise.  
The world is not filled with chaos.  
The universe is not out of control.

Our God reigns.  
And He will come to rule and to reign.  
Evil will be judged and all things restored.

And we can experience some of that restoration now.  
The blood of Jesus Christ calls out to you.  
Jesus came down to die for us.  
He spilled His blood so that we could be restored to a right relationship with the Father.  
He spilled His blood to restore our souls and to bring us back to life.  
We can experience some of this restoration now.  
If we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our hope.  
And He will begin His restoration of the world with us.  
Our salvation is a sneak peak of what God will do with the world.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. The final day of the Lord is a day of justice, decision, and restoration.
2. We have an election coming up. Many of you may have some anxiety or worry about what will happen. Most of us are probably just ready for it to be over. I don't know what will happen on Tuesday or the days after. But I have seen the end of the story. We know that the Final Day of the Lord will put things right. There will be many dark chapters ahead of us. But the last one will make it all worth it. Be at peace and remember the end.