

A Future and a Hope

Joel 2:18-27

Intro

A very common verse that is quoted by Christians is...

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

And truly this is a wonderful verse that has brought much comfort to Christians, especially during times of difficulty and hardship...

- But some complain that Christians should not use this verse because it was not originally written to Christians...

*To better understand this argument, let's turn to **Jeremiah 29** so that we might understand the context of the passage...*

Jeremiah 29:10-14 (NKJV)

10 For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

- [expand on original audience being the people of Judah who would be captives in Babylon...]

Be that as it may, I believe that what we read here in Jeremiah 29 is not merely a message for the captives in Babylon...

- I would argue that the message is much greater...

It is my belief that what we have in Jeremiah 29 is a revelation of the heart of God for all people...

Because the reality that we see throughout the entirety of the Scriptures is that ***God truly loves all people...***

- And when I say that God loves all people I mean that ***God has a genuine inner readiness and longing to secure the good of each and every person...***

I fully believe that God desires to give ***each and every person a future and a hope...***

- But this cannot happen ***unilaterally...***

In other words, a person must submit to God if they are to have a future and a hope...

- A person must come to God in repentance if they are to have a future and a hope...

A person must come to God for forgiveness if they are to have a future and hope...

We saw this last week as we referred to...

Ezekiel 33:10-11 (NLT)

10 “Son of man, give the people of Israel this message: You are saying, ‘Our sins are heavy upon us; we are wasting away! How can we survive?’

11 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?

- [ex. A parent trying to get their adult child to turn from a drug addiction that is killing them...]

So please hear me when I say this...

It is the heart of God to give each and every person on the planet a future and a hope...

We must understand this transformative truth if we are to understand God’s heart...

For more on this subject, please turn to...

John 3:14-19 (NKJV)

14 “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

So, while God’s desire for each and every person is that they have a future and a hope...

- ***The reality is that there is no future and no hope without the Lord Jesus Christ...***

He and He alone is the door to Heaven...

He and He alone is the only way of salvation for everyone who has ever lived — from Adam to the last person born in the Millennial Kingdom...

Anyone who trusts God the Father and the salvation that He provides through the Lord Jesus Christ will be born-again by the Holy Spirit and be guaranteed a future and a hope beyond all imagining...

But whoever fully and finally rejects the forgiveness of sins that the Lord Jesus purchased on the cross *has no future and no hope...*

- They are only left with the expectation of the judgment to come...

But it doesn't have to be this way!...

- ***If you have not yet come to the Lord Jesus for newness of life – come to Him and live!...***

Be forgiven and restored and enjoy the future and the hope that your Creator desires to give you...

So, with that as our extended introduction, would you now turn to the passage that we will be studying this morning...

Joel 2:18-27 (NKJV)

**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."**

**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.**

*I have simply entitled this message **A Future and a Hope** and I don't have an outline — we will simply take the verses as they come...*

- And as we ease our way back into Joel 2, I'll remind you of our study last week which was entitled **God is Good...**

During our time together we saw that God was warning the people of Judah of a **coming judgment...**

But God was not content with simply bringing the judgment...

Instead, through the Prophet Joel the Lord was **calling the people to repentance** so that the judgment would be averted...

- And we highlighted the reality that God prefers **forgiveness over judgment...**

As we have already seen in...

John 3:17 (NKJV)

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

- [expand — God can forgive us because the Lord Jesus has taken the judgment that we deserved...]

We also see God's desire to distribute forgiveness instead of judgment as the Lord Jesus cries out the following words in...

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

James, the half-brother of Jesus, writes this in...

James 2:13 (NKJV)

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

*Now, as we move into Joel 2:18 we are reminded that **remorse and repentance** leads to **restoration**...*

**18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land,
And pity His people.**

The word **Then** tells us that God will bring bring restoration when the people of Judah repent...

zealous for His land — *God is rightly possessive over Judah because it belongs to Him...*

It is good to remind ourselves that absolutely everything belongs to the Lord God...

Nehemiah 9:6 (NKJV)

**You alone are the LORD;
You have made heaven,
The heaven of heavens, with all their host,
The earth and everything on it,
The seas and all that is in them,
And You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You.**

Continuing on in Joel 2:18...

**Then the LORD will be zealous for His land,
And pity His people**

pity His people — *have compassion on His people, have mercy on them...*

- [ex. Father receiving the Prodigal Son and restoring him to the privileges of sonship...]

REMEMBER — If the Lord God were simply out to get you — then no one could stay His hand — and you would be got...

- ***But He is not out to get you — He's out to win you — to win your heart — to forgive and restore you...***

And there is only one thing that you can give Him that will please Him — yourself...

He wants to show you His mercy — He wants to restore you — but you must come to Him — He cannot force you to come...

Let's move on to vs...

19 The LORD will answer and say to His people,

This is a reminder that God *speaks to His people!*...

- And the primary way that God speaks to His people is through ***His Word — the Bible***...

But He also speaks to us through ***other people***, through ***circumstances*** and He is even willing to ***speak to us directly***...

- [suggested reading — *Hearing God* by Dallas Willard...]

And though some well-meaning Christians balk at the idea that God speaks directly to the believer, I would simply offer this gentle challenge...

- If ***you*** and ***I*** can speak directly to believers then doesn't it make sense to believe that ***God*** can speak directly to believers?... 🤔

Continuing on in Joel 2:19...

**"Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied by them;**

Wonderfully, the Lord will restore the land and make it fruitful again — the people will be provided for...

- Also, **grain, new wine and oil** were items used in the sacrificial system...[expand]

IMPORTANT POINT— We need not only physical provision — we need spiritual provision as well...

- [expand — we tend to fixate on our material well-being but pay little attention to our spiritual well-being...]

I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

- To continue in sin brings **reproach** — but **remorse and repentance lead to restoration...**

QUESTION — Do I want reproach or restoration?...

reproach — *scorn, disgrace, blame...*

restoration — *to bring back to or put into an original state...*

 The choice is ours!... 

Continuing on in Joel 2 we come to vs...

**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."**

Because of the people's repentance, judgment will be turned away...

This reminds me of something that Paul wrote in...

1 Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV)

For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

- [expand — examine yourself and repent before God chastens you — God gives us space and time to repent...]

Joel continues in vs...

21 Fear not, O land;

This is an ***active choice*** to turn from fear...

And instead of fearing the people are to...

**Be glad and rejoice,
For the LORD has done marvelous things!**

The lesson here is that we are to ***turn from fear*** and ***turn to the Lord...***

As we turn to the Lord we are to focus on...

The marvelous things He has done in the past...

The marvelous things He is doing in the present...

And the marvelous things that He will do in the future...

We are to choose gladness over fear — we are to choose rejoicing over complaining...

- ***But we must fuel these choices by what we focus on — our focus determines our direction...***

For incredibly helpful instruction on this subject, please turn to...

Philippians 4:4-9 (NKJV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

- [expand — the life of a Disciple of the Lord Jesus is ***not a passive life*** — it is ***an active life of focusing on what God wants us to focus on...***]

Please turn back to Joel 2 as we move into vs...

**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.**

- Joel foresees the future fruitfulness of the land and that fruitfulness is a blessing to both man and beast...

And we too should look forward to future fruitfulness of the land...

And I know that it is difficult to imagine a fruitful land as we live here in the desert...

- But the day is coming when we will experience the fruitfulness of the Millennial Kingdom...

And after the Millennial Kingdom we will experience the unending fruitfulness of the New Heaven and the New Earth!...[expand]

**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.**

The Lord will cause it to rain on Judah so that their crops may grow and that they might be experience restored fruitfulness...

- *And just as this is true on a material level, so it is true on a spiritual level...*

The Lord wants you to be a fruitful believer and He has provided all that you need to be fruitful...

For more on this subject would you please turn to...

John 15:1-5 (NKJV)

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

- [expand — abiding is doing life in relationship with the Lord Jesus — which will be life with the Father and the Holy Spirit as well...]

Abiding in Christ is doing life in relationship with the Triune God and in the empowering of the Triune God...

- [expand — progression — bearing fruit / bearing more fruit / bearing much fruit — must be pruned by the Father for this to happen...]

Please turn back to Joel 2 as we move into the wonderful promise of vs...

**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.**

Now, God was not going to take the people of Judah back in time and restore the physical years that they had lost but He was going to ***restore the lost fruitfulness of those years...***

- As we saw in Joel 1, when we live in sin we experience a ***wasting*** and a ***mourning*** — but we shouldn't remain in that place...

The ***wasting*** and ***mourning*** should lead us to ***remorse*** and ***repentance*** and then to ***restoration...***

- ***Please understand — God wants to restore the years that the locust has eaten in your life!...***

God wants you to be more fruitful than you have ever been — He wants to help you bear fruit, more fruit and much fruit...

- [ex. The Apostle Paul was the poster child for restoring the years the locust has eaten — if the Lord can do it in His life then He can do it in your life!...]

*As we move into vs 26-27 we will quickly see some of the incredible **benefits** of restoration...*

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,

The ***benefit of provision*** and ***satisfaction***...

**And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;**

The ***benefit of recognizing God's activity in your life*** and the ***benefit of praising Him for His wondrous works***...

And My people shall never be put to shame.

The ***benefit of knowing that the end of the believer's story is not shame but glory***...

27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel:

The ***benefit of the knowledge of God's presence***...

I am the LORD your God

And there is no other.

My people shall never be put to shame.

The ***benefit of knowing that God is our God and that He is the only God...***

As the Lord God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah in...

Isaiah 44:8 (NKJV)

**“Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock;
I know not one.”**

Conclusion

This brings us to the end of our study and Lord-willing we will make our way through the final verses of Joel 2 next week...

And as we close I will leave you with this...

God wants to give you a future and a hope...

- *[expand on this as the Lord leads...]*