

Judgment & Blessing

Joel 3

Intro

We read these words in the King James Version of...

Isaiah 30:18 (KJV)

**And therefore will the LORD wait,
that he may be gracious unto you,
and therefore will he be exalted,
that he may have mercy upon you:
for the LORD is a God of judgment:
blessed are all they that wait for him.**

The reality is that God is a God of both *judgment* and *blessing* — and we get to determine the type of relationship that we will have with Him...[expand]

*As we consider this truth, we must remind ourselves that God would prefer to **bless** rather than to **judge**...*

Ezekiel 33:11 (NKJV)

Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

James 2:13 (NKJV)

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

And though it is true that God would rather **ble^ss** than **judg^e** — we realize that most of humanity *refuses to walk in way that brings blessing...*

- Tragically, the majority of people continue to walk in the counsel of the ungodly and that sort of life inevitably leads to judgment...

And it is this challenging topic that we will study in Joel 3 this morning in a message I have simply entitled — **Judgment & Blessing...**

I have divided this study into three sections...

- 1) God the Judge**
- 2) Call to Judgment**
- 3) Blessing to Come**

Let's move into our first section...

1) God the Judge (vs 1-8)

1 "For behold, in those days and at that time,

*This seems to be a reference to the final **Day of the LORD...***

- [expand — Rapture of the Church / 7-year Tribulation Period / Return of Christ / Judgment of the Nations / establishment of the Millennial Kingdom...]

Continuing on in vs 1...

**"For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,**

Just as the Lord would bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem following the Babylonian Captivity — so He will regather His people during the Tribulation Period...

- [expand — Book of Revelation — 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ...]

2 I will also gather all nations,

This is a reference to nations that are not Israel...

And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;

Valley of Jehoshaphat — *there is no known valley with this name...*

Jehoshaphat means "*Yahweh judges*"...

This has led some commentators to believe that **the Valley of Jehoshaphat** refers to the Valley of Megiddo where the famed Battle of Armageddon will take place...

- And this could be the correct interpretation — because the nations will be judged there...

*With that said, there is another interpretation of **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**...*

In this alternative interpretation, the reference is not to a *literal valley* but instead refers to the time in which the Lord will judge the nations *at the end of the Tribulation Period but before the start of the Millennial Kingdom...*

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

Matthew 25:31-46 (NKJV)

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?

39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: [expand on why Hell was created...]

42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

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.'

46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- [expand — judgment of those who made it through the Tribulation Period...]

Let's turn back to Joel 3 as we continue on in vs 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.**

The way that the **nations** *have treated and continue to treat* the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is of great importance to God...

And we see this reality as far back as...

Genesis 12:1-3 (NKJV)

**1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:
"Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.**

**2 I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.**

**3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

- [expand — choice of blessing or cursing — ultimate blessing through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ — the most important descendant of Abraham...]

As we move on in Joel 3 we see some examples of how the Israelites were mistreated...

**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.**

- Tragically, Israelite children were beings used as currency for paying off debts...

And while the immediate focus of these verses is how the people of Judah were mistreated by the pagan nations around them — we must remember that the sinful mistreatment of *any person* is a gross sin that is worthy of judgment by God...

- Sadly, we have all mistreated others — so we must seek the forgiveness that is found in Christ — only through Him can we escape the judgment that we deserve...[expand]

**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 Because you have taken My silver and My gold,
And have carried into your temples My prized possessions.**

Tyre, Sidon and Philistia were traditional enemies of God who harassed the Israelites and stole **silver** and **gold** and other **prized possessions** to take into their pagan temples...

- So God warns them here that their **retaliation** against Him will not work...

[expand — What were they thinking? — What did they think that God owed them?...]

Whatever they were thinking — it was wrong — God did not owe them anything — everything belongs to Him...[expand]

REMINDER — God does not owe you and me anything either...

Job 41:11 (NKJV)

**“Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him?
Everything under heaven is Mine.”**

Psalms 89:11 (NKJV)

**The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all its fullness, You have founded them.**

Anything that God has given to us is a blessing and is not something that we have earned through our own merit...

I love the way Paul expressed this truth in...

1 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)

...what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Let's move on in Joel 3 to vs 6-8...

**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.**

**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.**

**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.”**

*This is a clear case of **reaping** what you **sow**...*

If the people of foreign nations were willing to sell the people of Judah into slavery then the Lord was going to punish them by doing the same thing to them...[expand]

Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV)

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

- [ex. if a person chooses to live a life of crime — they open themselves up to all the terrible things that come with that lifestyle...]

In a similar way, anyone who chooses to live in unrepentant sin is sowing to the flesh and of the flesh they will reap corruption...
[expand]

*We move now from **God the Judge** to our second section...*

2) Call to Judgment (vs 9-17)

We will begin by considering vs 9-12...

9 Proclaim this among the nations:

"Prepare for war!

Wake up the mighty men,

Let all the men of war draw near,

Let them come up.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords

And your pruning hooks into spears;

Let the weak say, 'I am strong.'"

11 Assemble and come, all you nations,

And gather together all around.

Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD.

12 "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;

For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

This most likely refers to the Battle of Armageddon where the armies of the unbelieving nations come up to fight against the LORD...[expand]

*And the imagery of these verses is a reminder that there are only two sides — you are either **with God** or **against God**...*

Matthew 12:30 (NKJV)

“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

And though people generally hate this truth — it is actually incredibly good news...

- Because it lets us sinners know that we can lay down our arms, surrender, and join God's side...

To see this glorious truth, would you please turn to...

John 6:37-40 (NKJV)

37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

We also given these wonderful words in...

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Unfortunately, as we turn back to Joel 3 we see that most refuse to surrender to their rightful Lord...

*And as we move through this section, it is important to remind ourselves once again that many Bible commentators believe that this section of Joel 3 is a prophesy of the events **leading up to and including the Battle of Armageddon...***

**13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Come, go down;
For the winepress is full,
The vats overflow—
For their wickedness is great.”**

[expand — imagery of the reaping of judgment / symbolic of the blood that will be shed...]

- [expand — blood is a symbol of life / life is in the blood / sin brings a loss of life / another had to shed His blood — give His life — so that we might live...]

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

**15 The sun and moon will grow dark,
And the stars will diminish their brightness.**

**16 The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;**

This is a picture of the Lord Jesus returning as the Conquering King to establish His righteous rule on the earth...

For more on His return, please turn to...

Revelation 19:11-21 (NKJV)

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

**KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.**

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Please turn back now Joel 3 as we move into the second half of vs 16 and into vs 17...

**But the LORD will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.**

**17 "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.
Then Jerusalem shall be holy,
And no aliens shall ever pass through her again."**

The Lord Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem and no one will be able to overthrow Him...

- Never again will Jerusalem suffer at the hands of unbelievers — it will be a place of righteousness always...

This brings us to our final section...

3) Blessing to Come (vs 18-21)

**18 And it will come to pass in that day
That the mountains shall drip with new wine,
The hills shall flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water;
A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD
And water the Valley of Acacias.**

This speaks of the amazing restoration of the land that will take place during the Millennial Kingdom...[expand]

**19 "Egypt shall be a desolation,
And Edom a desolate wilderness,
Because of violence against the people of Judah,
For they have shed innocent blood in their land.**

Egypt and **Edom** are ancient enemies of Israel and are therefore symbolic of Israel's enemies as a whole...

- But when the Lord Jesus establishes His Millennial Kingdom, no more of His enemies will remain...[expand]

**20 But Judah shall abide forever,
And Jerusalem from generation to generation.**

**21 For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted;
For the LORD dwells in Zion."**

Judah and Jerusalem — and all the people of God — will be *forgiven* and will *abide* with the Lord forever...

What an incredible blessing to come...

Conclusion

So, as we close our time together I will simply remind you of three truths...

- 1) God is the Judge — He and He alone is worthy of passing full and final judgment on human beings...***
- 2) God will call unbelievers to Judgment — all who fail to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins will be judged for their sin...***
- 3) There is tremendous Blessing to Come to all who have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins...***