

THE COMING JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

Joel 3:1-17

Intro: Dr. Feinberg says about this chapter, "No prophet of the Old Testament has a more important revelation of the end times than the one now before us in the third chapter" (Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, p. 32).

He is concerned with the Day of the Lord--that prophetic period which follows the Rapture of the Church and which includes The Great Tribulation and the Millennial Reign of Christ, separated by the Return of Christ to the earth!

Christ will come to the earth after the Great Tribulation. He will come for the Church before the Tribulation.

The period which will start after the Rapture is ^{the period known as} the last days, or those days, or The Day of the Lord, for Israel and for the nations of the earth!

Everything in the Tribulation points ahead to the coming of the Lord; everything in the Millennium is the result of His coming. The Tribulation will be the time of Israel's greatest suffering; the Millennium will be the time of Israel's greatest blessing!

The power of the Gentile nations over Israel will reach its zenith in the Great Tribulation. This will bring to an end 'the times of the Gentiles.' Cf. Luke 21:24. THEREFORE, ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THAT THE LORD WILL DO WHEN HE RETURNS TO REIGN OVER ISRAEL IS TO BRING THE GENTILES, NOT AS NATIONS, BUT AS INDIVIDUALS, TO JUDGMENT.

This is Joel's subject in Joel 3:1-17.

The plan goes like this:

- 1) He, the Lord, talks about the nations (vv. 1-3).
- 2) He talks to the nations (vv. 4-11).
- 3) He talks about them again (vv. 12-16).
- 4) Finally, He speaks to Israel (v. 17).

But we can also see this in chapter 3, verses 1-17:

- 1) The time of the judgment of the nations (v. 1).
- 2) The place of the judgment (v. 2).
- 3) The reason for the judgment (vv. 3-8).
- 4) The resistance to the judgment (vv. 9-11).
- 5) The certainty and extent of the judgment (vv. 12-14).
- 6) The results which will accompany and follow the judgment (vv. 15-17).

Tonight we will follow this second division of the verses of our text.

I. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT (v. 1).

It will take place when the Lord brings to an end, once and for all times, the captivity of Israel. Cf. v. 17b. There is no question but that this will take place at the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. Cf. Zech. 8.

II. THE PLACE OF THE JUDGMENT (v. 2).

GOD'S DEL.
FOR ISRAEL
IN THE LAST
DAYS WILL
PARALLEL THAT
OF JEHOSEPHAT'S
DAY.

It will take place in "the valley of Jehoshaphat"—mention only here and in v. 12. Undoubtedly the name is connected in thought with 2 Chron. 20. But the exact location is not known although it has to be near Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat means, Jehovah judges—therefore the significance of the name here. Also called, "the Valley of decision."

III. THE REASON FOR THE JUDGMENT (vv. 3-6).

Obviously, the Gentiles are judged by their treatment of Israel during the time of the Great Tribulation. BUT, the mention of Tyre and Sidon and Philistia goes back to the times immediately following Jehoshaphat in Judah when the Philistines invaded Judah, taking away the king's substance and his sons, and sold them to the Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon being cities of Phoenicia). Therefore, the proximity of these nations to Israel nor the antiquity of their sins will escape the notice of God in those days—even though Jehoram deserved what they did to him!

God may hold His silence of hundreds and sometimes thousands of years, but eventually the day of judgment comes!

Note: These have been crimes against Jehovah Himself!

Cf. v. 2, "My people . . . My heritage, Israel . . . My land; v. 3, "My people; v. 4, "Me"; v. 5, "My silver and My gold . . . My precious things."

Cf. Matt. 25:31-46 for these same two ideas:

- 1) The nations judged for their treatment of Israel—as an indication of their faith.
- 2) The fact that God takes what they did as being against Him.

IV. THE RESISTANCE TO THE JUDGMENT (vv. 9-11).

Here is Armageddon. Cf. Rev. 16:16; 19:11-21. There will be millions of Gentiles in the land at that time, and they will all be brought to judgment in spite of their intense preparation for war against Israel.

We talk today about disarmament; THE WORLD HAS YET TO SEE ITS GREATEST ARMS RACE as predicted here by the prophet Joel.

V. THE GENTILES AND THE LORD'S JUDGMENT (vv. 14-17).

Armies from heaven, angelic beings, will assist our Lord in this judgment. Cf. Rev. 19:14-16; Matt. 25:31, 32. They are the ones addressed with the words, "Put in the sickle." Cf. Rev. 14:14-20. The book of the Revelation makes it clear that, while God's judgment of the nations will take on final and tremendous dimensions at the close of the Tribulation, yet the Gentiles will experience His judgment in various ways throughout the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

VI. THE RESULTS (vv. 15-17).

Cf. for v. 15, 2:30, 31. The difference is that in ch. 2 the prophet is telling how this will affect Israel; in ch. 3, how it will affect the Gentile nations.

For v. 16 to be fulfilled, the Lord must be on earth!

Finally, there will be the universal recognition of Jehovah, the God of Israel and of the nations--that which God has been seeking to make known from the very beginning of Israel's history as a nation. Cf. Exodus.

See also Phil. 2:5-11.

Concl: What are we to learn from these verses? Let me suggest three outstanding and very apparent lessons:

- 1) We must never mistake the silence of God.
- 2) We cannot overestimate the love of God for His people.
- 3) Regardless of men and nations, the Lord will see all of His purposes fully accomplished with His Son reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords, over all the earth!