

## *Justice and Glorification at History's End*

Joel 3:1-21

Nowhere else in the Old Testament is the Day of the Lord treated in such a sustained way as in the book of Joel. Within his book three events are described by that phrase: The plague of locusts that occurred during Joel's own day (1:15); the coming day of judgment for Judah (2:1, 11) which was eventually fulfilled when the Babylonians carried Judah into captivity; and the great act of judgment at history's end when all nations and peoples of the earth will stand before Almighty God (2:31 and 3:14). It is that final Day of the Lord that is the subject of our lesson today.

**Open Your Heart:** "Gracious Father, help me to live every moment of my life in light of this solemn and glorious reality—the long awaited 'day' when You will right all wrongs and hold all nations and individuals accountable to Your holy standards—Your holy character!"

Like a photographer, Joel uses a wide-angle lens to give us an overall picture of "that final day" in Joel 2:30-32. Then he zooms in for a closer look in chapter 3 where we see a mixture of divine judgment and retribution which culminates in a description of God's permanent presence with His redeemed people in the eternal Kingdom of God!

**Read** Joel 2:28 through 3:21. Then **reread** Joel 3:1-8.

1. Chapter three begins with the words: "In those days and at that time." To what time period is this prophecy directed? Observe the overall context from Joel 2:28 through chapter 3. Support your answer.

The closing chapter of the book of Joel also answers the mocking question the Gentiles would ask when the nation of Israel experienced destruction and exile.

2. a. What promises does the LORD make to His covenant people in Joel 3:1-2?
  - b. From the following cross references consider the meaning of the promise "restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem" from Joel 3:1. Also **read** and consider Deuteronomy 30:3; Zephaniah 2:6-7; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Jeremiah 33:11b-26 and Romans 11:25-27. Record your insights below.





10. In Joel 3:13 what is the Divine army invited to do? In your answer include the meaning of the explicit imagery found in this verse. Consult Isaiah 63:1-6 and Revelation 14:14-20 for additional information concerning “the Day” of God’s holy wrath.

As Joel looks out upon the Valley of Jehoshaphat he sees multitudes facing their eternal fate (3:14-16).

11. Who do the multitudes represent? Recall the overall context of the passage.

Often this section has been used in evangelistic settings to urge the masses to decide *their* fate.

12. But who is really making the decision concerning the fate of the multitudes in Joel 3:14? Support your answer from the text.

13. Consider what the nations will learn on this historic “Day of the Lord” (Ezekiel 39:6-8).

*The **full wrath** of God is revealed at two points in history: at the final judgment described by Joel and other biblical writers, and at the cross of Christ, where it has already been poured out for those who trust in Jesus. And now, the thunder of God’s voice which was sounded in connection with the locust plague in 2:11 is heard again in 3:16. This time the thunderclap sounds the death knell for the enemies of God who were attacking Jerusalem. **Reread** Joel 3:16a.*

14. How has your perception of God and His justice been altered by Joel’s prophecy?

And now Joel looks beyond that great battle of the nations where *justice* and the ultimate triumph over evil is in view—to the *enormous blessings that will rest on the repentant, restored and revitalized people of God* (3:16b-21).

In rich and glowing terms Joel describes the glory and splendor of God's future Kingdom.

15. *Take time to meditate on this marvelous disclosure in God's Word (Joel 3:16-21).*

What are some of the eternal blessings that will be bestowed on God's restored people?

16. How is the hope expressed in Joel 3:17-21 greater than our present experience in Christ?  
Also **read** and enjoy Revelation 21:1-5.

### **For Thought and Discussion**

17. What are your honest feelings about the end times? How will Scriptures referencing these times make a difference in your daily priorities and the inheritance you wish to leave behind?

18. Take a moment to reflect on all that you have explored in our study of Joel. Browse through the book and put a heart next to a phrase or verse that was especially encouraging to you.

♥ **Store this verse in your heart** and write it out below.

*God brings judgment, God brings His Spirit and God brings restoration—the secret and the mystery of life!*