## 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.

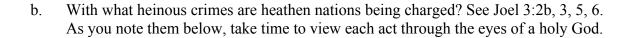
1. Chapter three begins with the words: "In those days and at that time." To what time period is this prophecy directed? Observe the overall context from Joel 2:28 through chapter 3. Support your answer.

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.

In this section Joel speaks words of assurance to God's covenant people, reminding them that the unchanging God is still on the throne directing all things to their appointed end. (Also see Micah 4:11-12.)

3.	a.	For what specific purpose is the LORD gathering the nations to the Valley of
		Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2a)?



Note: There is no location in Israel known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It is used in this chapter as a symbol for the place of God's judgment. The name literally means, "The Lord judges."

## Reread Joel 3:4-8.

In these verses we see God's solemn promise of sure retaliation against the enemies of His people.

4. In what ways will God render justice to the nations of Tyre, Sidon and Philistia?

Because of the strong eschatological theme of this chapter it is important not to define *nations* too specifically. It is apparent that total justice for all nations is in view in this chapter.

Joel's message to Judah (and to us) is about to reach its final climax. Joel described the immediate "day of the Lord"—the terrible plague of the locusts. This led to a description of the imminent "day of the Lord"—the impending invasion of the northern army. All that remains is for him to describe the ultimate "day of the Lord" when God will judge all the nations of the earth.

5.	a.	Review the description of the "Day of the Lord" from <b>Amos</b> Lesson 7, page 1.	
	b.	Prepare your heart for the climactic scene we are about to witness through Joel's vision.	
6.		ughtfully <b>reread</b> Joel 3:9-12. How are the participants in God's holy war notified of impending battle?	
7.	a.	From Joel 3:9-10 list all who will be summoned to the battlefield. What picture is Joel intending to give us about this mobilization?	
	b.	<i>How</i> are they to prepare for battle according to verse 10? For an interesting side note: compare this scene with Micah 4:3.	
Joel 8.		seems to be a signal from the messengers that the troops are being readied for war. ght of this fact what is the meaning of 3:11b, "Bring down your warriors, O LORD!?"	
9.	In verse 12 the LORD repeats the invitation to battle and reveals that the real purpose of thi encounter is		
Gent	ile na	distinctive element of surprise and shock associated with the final judgment of the ations. When they are all assembled in the valley, fully equipped for battle, they will find fudge of all the nations and in their hands they will be holding the incriminating	

evidence of their own history of violence. They will turn out in response to the call to battle, only

to discover that they are to be judged for their warfare and violence. -Craigie

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.
	pel looks out upon the Valley of Jehoshaphat he sees multitudes facing their eternal fate I-16).
`	Who do the multitudes represent? Recall the overall context of the passage.
Ofter 12.	n this section has been used in evangelistic settings to urge the masses to decide <i>their</i> fate. 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).
and o those with	full wrath of God is revealed at two points in history: at the final judgment described by Joel other biblical writers, and at the cross of Christ, where it has already been poured out for who trust in Jesus. And now, the thunder of God's voice which was sounded in connection the locust plague in 2:11 is heard again in 3:16. This time the thunderclap sounds the death for the enemies of God who were attacking Jerusalem. Reread Joel 3:16a. How has your perception of God and His justice been altered by Joel's prophecy?

ove revi	If now Joel looks beyond that great battle of the nations where <i>justice</i> and the ultimate triumpher evil is in view—to the <i>enormous blessings that will rest on the repentant, restored and stalized people of God</i> (3:16b-21). Sich and glowing terms Joel describes the glory and splendor of God's future Kingdom. <i>Take time to meditate on this marvelous disclosure in God's Word (Joel 3:16-21)</i> . 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 <b>read</b> and enjoy Revelation 21:1-5.
<b>For</b> 17.	Thought and Discussion 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!