

Readings

Scripture

¹“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, ³and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.

⁴“What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. ⁵For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. ⁶You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. ⁷Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head. ⁸I 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 nation far away, for the Lord has spoken.”

⁹Proclaim this among the nations: Consecrate for war; stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. ¹⁰Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am a warrior.”

¹¹Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord. ¹²Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

¹³Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.

¹⁴Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

¹⁶The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

¹⁷“So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it.”

¹⁸“And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim.”

¹⁹“Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. ²⁰But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. ²¹I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion.”

- Joel 3:1-21 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

God is a Refuge
Joel 3:1-21

Return With All Your Heart
Brad Anderson

In the crescendo of the last storm there is only one shelter... (Joel 3:16)

How will those both outside and inside the shelter experience the crescendo?

The crescendo outside the shelter... (Joel 3:9-15)

The crescendo inside the shelter... (Joel 3:17-21)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- What “lost fortune” would you like to see returned to you today? How could you get it back?
- “In those days” (Joel 3:1) refers to when: a) Sometime after Joel, but before Christ? b) After Christ, but before now? c) A time yet to come? d) All of the above? e) Nothing specific? Explain.
- For what five things will the nations be judged (Joel 3:2-3)? How will they be “repaid”?
- The “valley of Jehoshaphat” Joel 3:5, 12) is not a known geographical site. What then might Joel intend by naming such a place?
- Why are the nations to be judged told to prepare for war (Joel 3:9-11), only to meet the Lord’s warriors? What is the outcome of that war (Joel 3:13)?
- Where you live, how might people be “sold” or “traded”? Is prostitution or child pornography a problem in your area? Likewise, refugee relocation and prisoners of conscience? What do you suppose God thinks of this?
- How do you respond to Joel saying, “God will return on your heads what you have done”?
- Does Joel disturb your image of God? How so? Does your image of God allow, preclude, or demand this kind of judgment on sinful nations or persons?
- How can a person enter into the Lord’s refuge?