

Joel 3:9-16 – God’s War Against His Enemies

Delitzsch, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, Gill, Geneva, Armstrong, Poole, JFB, Henry, Clarke, Calvin, Trapp, INT, Barnes, Expositor’s
Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: One of the more remarkable passages of the Scriptures is Exodus 14. It describes the time when the Israelites were leaving Egypt, heading for Canaan. The Red Sea was in front of them and the Egyptians were behind them. Fear came over the Israelites as the Egyptians changed their minds and decided to recapture the Jews and re-enslave them. The Jews had served Egypt for 400 years and the Egyptians did not want to lose their slave labor.

So Moses prayed to God for help and God helped. God told them to stand still and see the salvation he would work before their eyes! And God did. He destroyed Pharaoh and his army totally, humiliating them...and that story spread far and wide...so that even when they arrived in Canaan 40 years later, because they had heard of the great deliverance of Israel and the destruction of the Egyptians, the Canaanites were shaking in their boots when they saw the Jews.

Today you will see God’s war against his enemies who had unfairly targeted his people and kept them in captivity for 70 years.

Our headings are:

The Call to the nations to come and fight God

The Consequences on the nations who fight with God

Our goals are: That you will desire and pray for God to destroy his enemies so the church can thrive.

The Call to the nations to come and fight God

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.

1. God commanded the nations who opposed his people to get ready to come and fight against him.

God had done this in the past to Egypt, Canaan, Ammon, Moab, Syria, and Assyria, among others. **Now he was calling the Babylonians and their acolytes-the Tyrians, Sidonians, and Greeks**-to come together in battle against him.

Later, in the same pattern, God would go after Antiochus Epiphanes and the Greeks to protect his people. And then he would **go after the Romans and the Jews, judging them for harassing his children.**

Revelation 19:11 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.

God was so confident of defeating these nations he gave them ample warning to prepare. He wouldn’t do a sneak-attack.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears;

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

2. God wanted these enemy nations to prepare more weapons to come and fight him.

He was saying this to **nations that already had many weapons and large armies.**

He wanted them to even turn their **plowshares in swords.**

He wanted them to even turn their **pruning hooks and make them into spears.** He even wanted farmers to fight.

He wanted them to **build themselves up in their own minds,** make themselves think they were strong.

11 Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around.
Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD.

3. God wanted the heathens (nations) to assemble against him; he wanted them to "come and pick on someone their own size."

He was ready to defend the cause of his suppressed people.

Psalms 9:4 For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. 5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever...

This great assembly of the nations was important, because when the nations would be defeated, **there would be no excuse why they lost.** They would **not be able to say, "We sent our second best."** **God wanted them to prepare and send their best!**

God would send the Medo-Persians to do his work...and **angels of heaven** as he did before to the Assyrians.

4. God wanted his people to see him taking on and humiliating all the nations so:

a. The Jews would know captivity would not go on forever. God would "harvest the wicked."

Revelation 14:14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and **in His hand a sharp sickle.**

b. The Jews would not have to worry, but receive courage and comfort, even during captivity.

5. Lessons:

a. The same thing is true today: God is not afraid of any of your enemies. He will bring them to their knees. God can do what he says! He never over-promises.

Psalms 10:16 The LORD is King forever and ever; The nations have perished

out of His land.

Do people mock you for living pure lives? Don't worry about it. They will learn soon enough.

Does your heart break when children of Christians are being murdered for their faith (see your bulletin)? Don't worry. They will learn soon enough.

Should Christians in NY panic when Mayor de Blasio threatened to close churches permanently if they worshipped (while allowing mass demonstrations)? No. He should worry. He will learn soon enough.

b. Announce among the nations, the Lord reigns and he is the only one to be feared. This is the world's only hope.

Psalms 96:10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; The world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously."

This is how they will be conquered – **with the Word of God**. Don't confuse your duties. God will judge. You must preach.

The Consequences on the nations who fight with God

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**. 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**."

1. God wanted the nations to come and face condemnation in a fair trial before the world.

God **could not destroy a nation without proving guilt**. And **other nations would see the guilt of other nations**. And their guilt would be very great. They had attacked the Jews who were innocent of any unfairness against the nations!

God wanted them to **come to** the "Valley of Jehoshaphat," that **valley of judgment and defeat**. "Jehoshaphat, God is judge,"

2. God would then call his servants (Medo-Persians) to execute his judgment on the guilty Babylonians and their acolytes.

It is true that harvest, winepress, and overflowing vats sound like good things, but they are agricultural references to judgment.

The sickle cuts down and destroys the plant, killing it. These evil nations were "ripe" for ruin.

The wine press crushes grapes...and lets the red "blood" flow...even to the point the vats overflow...

God had warned about this judgment on the surrounding nations after captivity specifically...

Jeremiah 51:33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "**The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor** when it is time to thresh her; Yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come."

The nations had to come up to the valley...as the valley was higher than the flat lands where many of the enemies lived.

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

3. God would not take long, as far as his time goes, to bring judgment on all the peoples, nations upon nations.

They would face their end in the Valley of Judgment...the Valley of Jehoshaphat he talked about before.

God would use the **Medo-Persians to kill them. They were his sickle and his winepress!**
The Jews were still small.

Psalms 110:6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries.

This would surely have been an **encouragement to the Jews** who were being reassured that the size of their opponents did not matter to God at all. And this would have been **warning to the surrounding nations to leave the Jews alone.**

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

4. God would destroy the leaders of the nations.

The sun, moon, and stars represented the leaders of these nations. Their "lights" going out meant they would be defeated and destroyed. God described the destruction of Babylon in Isaiah 13, in the same way. So this was not describing the end of the world. This was **common hyperbole** - figurative language.

16 The **LORD also will roar from Zion**, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The **heavens and earth will shake**; But the LORD will be a **shelter for His people**, And the **strength of the children of Israel.**

5. God would protect his covenant people and shelter them in the future, even though things would be rough for a while.

Psalms 132:13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place:

He would roar! And what voice! It would put fear in the opponents.

Psalms 18:13 The LORD thundered from heaven, and **the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.**

Jeremiah 25:31 A **noise will come to the ends of the earth** — For the LORD has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword...

6. Their “heaven and earth” would shake (religious and political structure), when Babylon would be destroyed.

Haggai 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

But God would make his people safe in his harbor. *“The Lord’s our Rock, in him we hide, a shelter in the time of storm.”*

Psalms 46:1 **God is our refuge and strength**, a very present help in trouble.

7. Lessons:

a. The nations laughed at God and his people, especially when the Jews were turned over to the Babylonians, but God would put a stop to their laughing. Don’t worry about those who laugh and try to tie down Christians today! God will stop their laughing. God will bring their house down. God will stop them in their tracks. (Pick any conquering phrase you like.)

b. The only way for the church to work for Jesus in an unimpeded way is for the persecutors to be destroyed. Don’t be afraid to pray for this. Sing about it. Desire it. Don’t cringe, as if you are thinking or asking for something bad.

This same language showed the future work of God...except later it would be Jews who would become God’s enemies. He would use his servants (Romans) to execute his judgment on the Jews who were oppressing Christians.

Revelation 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "**How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood** on those who dwell on the earth?"

Look at the judgment.

Revelation 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and **he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle**, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and **gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.**" 19 So the angel thrust his sickle

into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and **threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.**

c. When God destroys his people's enemies, peace will come. All the weapons of war will be beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks. What a reversal!

Isaiah 2:4 He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Do you see why you must pray for this?

d. This battle continues, except yours is a spiritual battle, wielding the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. You are to conquer with truth. Justice is God's.

e. Be ready for God's judgment day. It is coming. He will roar. There will be a great shout from heaven! Be prepared to meet him.

1 Thessalonians 4:16...the Lord Himself will descend from heaven **with a shout**, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Conclusion:

The Lord called on the nations that made his people suffer to prepare for war against him. Then he showed his people the results of that war. Their enemies would be totally devastated.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Desire, hope, and pray God will destroy his enemies so his Bride, saved by the blood of his Son, can go about her duty and serve him and reproduce.

2. But don't desire revenge on your personal enemies, but on the church's enemies.

3. Even as you desire, hope, and pray for justice, remember that the way to conquer the church's enemies is to share the Gospel so they are conquered with truth and be converted to Jesus.

Finally, while the church will have the sopranos and the tenors, the enemies of God's people will have suffering and terrors. The only way out is to cry out to God for help. Ask him to show you your sins now...count them on Jesus...free you from their consequences...and make you his child... He'll do it if you ask.