

A Study of the Minor Prophets
The Book of Joel ~ Chapter 3
Lesson 3

1. **Chapter 3:1- end** Israel's future restoration will include the judgment of the nations for their crimes against the Lord's people (vv. 1–8). In the days of Jehoshaphat, the Lord defeated a coalition of enemy nations without Judah's armies even having to fight in the valley of Beracah (2 Chr. 20:1–20). The judgments the Lord was about to execute against the nations responsible for Judah's exile anticipates his final judgment against all wicked nations in the last days (Joel 3:9–16). Micah and Isaiah anticipate a future day of peace when the nations "will beat their swords into plows" (Mic 4:3; Isa 2:4), but this must be preceded by a time when they "beat their plows into swords" and assemble against the Lord and his people in one final act of rebellion. The "Day of the Lord is near" warning earlier directed toward God's people (1:15) is now turned against the nations. The Lord, roaring as a lion and marching out as a warrior from Zion, will cause the lights in the heavens to go dark and the earth to quake. Still, in the midst of this cosmic disturbance, he will provide refuge for Israel.
2. **Theological insights from Joel:** The message of Joel serves as a reminder of the seriousness of obedience for those who live in a covenant relationship with the Lord. Before Israel entered the land, Moses instructed people that their decision to obey the Lord's commands was a matter of life and death. The covenantal history of Israel provides a powerful illustration of the general spiritual principle of sowing and reaping (see Gal 6:7–9). Israel had literally reaped the harvest of its disobedience.
3. While the Lord requires obedience, he is also merciful and compassionate to forgive sin and relent from judgment when his sinful people turn to him in repentance. Joel particularly stresses that God is responsive to the genuinely penitent cries of his people. Joel 2:13, stresses, one way the Lord demonstrates his covenantal faithfulness to his people is by his willingness to forgive them when they are unfaithful to him. Even at the time of eschatological judgment, all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32). The New Testament gives that promise a Christological focus—it is all who call on the name of Jesus as Lord who will be saved from God's wrath and judgment (Rom 10:13). Joel 3 is one of several prophetic texts that portray the judgment of the last days as including an eschatological battle in which the Lord destroys the nations that assault Israel or that assemble in armed rebellion against him (see Isa 66:18; Ezekiel 38–39; Mic 5:5–9; Zephaniah 3; Zechariah 12, 14).