

Title:               **JOEL**  
                              **Jehovah is God**

Text:               Joel 1:1-3

Subject:       *The Day of the Lord*

Date:               Tuesday Evening—October 21, 2003

Tape #            X-80b

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Introduction:

WE all like to know the reason for things. Perhaps because we are naturally inquisitive—perhaps because we want someone or something to blame for things we don't like—but we all want to know the reason for things. Through the ages men have endeavored to discover the principle upon which history turns. Since the dawn of history philosophers and those who think they are philosophers have continually debated what controls destiny.—Is it fate or free will?—Is it man, or nature, or some higher power?

Aristotle and the ancient Greek philosophers (those wise fools Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 1), determined that history moves in cycles, like the planets orbit the sun.

Thomas Jefferson, and many of our nation's founding fathers, was convinced that the history of the world was determined by the political direction of nations, by human government.

In the late 1800s Karl Marx dipped his pen in acid and taught in his Communist Manifesto that the controlling

force of history is economic, what he called “dialectical materialism.”

Multitudes today, follow the thinking of men like H. G. Wells, and are convinced that evolution is the controlling force of the universe. These “brilliant” minds, burying their heads in the sand, are convinced that man is constantly engaged in self-improvement, that man is constantly making himself better physically, mentally, morally and socially, and constantly improve history by the force of human evolution.

Of course, the Word of God reveals that which no man left to himself can ever figure out—that which no man left to himself will ever acknowledge—that which, sooner or later, everyone must acknowledge.—God and God alone controls the universe. And that God who controls the universe is Jehovah our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The hinge upon which all history turns is the cross of Christ (John 12:30-32).
- The hand that works the machinery is God’s (Rom. 8:28; 11:36).

**Proposition:** That is the message of Joel’s prophecy.—Jehovah is God.—As the Book of Hosea reveals the heart of God in redemption, the Book of Joel reveals the hand of God ruling the universe to save his people.

The opening verses of this short prophecy tell us plainly that the prophet's message was intended for both the people to whom he spoke and to the people of future generations (1:1-3).

(Joel 1:1-3) "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. {2} Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? {3} Tell ye your children of it, and *let* your children *tell* their children, and their children another generation."

We know nothing at all about when Joel lived and prophesied. WE know nothing of the historic circumstances of his prophecy. All we know is that his name was **Joel, which means "Jehovah is God,"** and that his father's name was **Pethuel, which means "the openheartedness or sincerity of God."**

### **THE THEME**

One of the most meaningful statements ever written, and one of the most terrifying, is found in Genesis 6:3. There the Lord God declares, "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*"

The Book of Joel, in my opinion, drives that fact home and hammers it out more forcefully than any of the other prophetic books. The theme of this prophecy is "*the Day of the Lord.*" Joel speaks of "*the Day of the Lord*" five times in these three short chapters.

Joel tells us that history is moving constantly to an appointed end, called “*the Day of the Lord.*”

(Joel 1:15) "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

(Joel 2:1) "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;"

(Joel 2:11) "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

(Joel 2:31) "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."

(Joel 3:14) "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision."

If you read these three chapters at one setting, you will see that Joel does not use this phrase (“*the Day of the Lord*”) to refer to a specific, single day or time.

- In chapter 1 (v. 15) “*the Day of the Lord*” is immediate. It referred to the day in which the judgment of God was seen in the land.
- In chapter 2 (vv. 1, 11, 31) “*the Day of the Lord*” is imminent, referring to judgment that may come at any time.
- In chapter 3 (v. 14) “*the Day of the Lord*” is future, referring to the final, consummate end of all things.

It is important that we observe this. As it is used by Joel, “*the Day of the Lord*” refers to any day in which the Lord God displays his sovereignty as God. In other words, yesterday was “*the Day of the Lord.*” Today is “*the Day of the Lord.*” And tomorrow shall be “*the Day of the Lord.*” And there is a day coming when all creation shall acknowledge, this is “*the Day of the Lord.*”

## DAY OF WARNING

First, Joel tells us that “*the Day of the Lord*” is a day of warning, a day when the Lord God sends judgment to warn us of judgment.

(Joel 1:15) "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

The Lord God sent a plague of locusts upon the land of Judah because of their sin. With this plague of locusts the Lord called his people to repentance.

These locusts describe an army far, far worse than any army of locusts or of men. These locusts not only destroyed the vegetation of the land, they cut off and took away the sacrifice from the house of God (1:9).

Joel lived in a day much like our day, a day when God's manifest judgment had fallen upon a people who were called by his name because they had forsaken his name (1 Pet. 4:17-18).

(1 Pet 4:17-18) "For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? {18} And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

**When the Lord God visits a nation, a people, a generation, or an individual in providential judgment, it is a warning of judgment to come and a merciful call to repentance** (1:13-16, 19). He is saying, "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*"

(Joel 1:13-16) "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. {14} Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD. {15} Alas for the day! for the day of the

LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. {16} Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, *yea*, joy and gladness from the house of our God?"

(Joel 1:19) "O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field."

(Joel 2:1) "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand."

Before this army of locusts came the land was like the Garden of Eden. They left behind them a desolate, barren wilderness (2:3).

"An army of locusts is incredible to those who have not watched it. They fill the air, and darken the sun like an eclipse (2:2), and spread for miles over the land. The advance columns will attack all that is green and succulent; in half an hour every leaf and blade is destroyed (1:11, 12). Others coming on in succession will strip the bark from the trees (1:6, 7). A land so devastated takes years to recover (1:17-20). The noise of their wings can be heard for miles, and the noise of the browsing is like a fire (2:5), and the land over which they have passed has the appearance of being fire-swept (2:3). Having stripped the country, they scale the walls of the cities, in serried ranks like mailed horsemen and

chariots, and marching into the houses consume everything which can be consumed in their resistless onslaught (2:4, 7-9).”

(A. M. Hodgkin)

Like an army of locusts, false religion devours everything and gives nothing. It eclipses the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS and takes away the sacrifice. It destroys the souls of men. And it comes as the judgment of God upon a people who refuge to worship him (2 Thess. 2:11-12). **This horrible army is God's army** (v. 11).

(2 Th 2:11-12) "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: {12} That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

(Joel 2:11) "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"

## **HOPE GIVEN**

At the close of verse 11 in chapter 2, the question is raised—“Who can abide the day of God’s wrath?” (See Nahum 1:2-6.)

(Nahum 1:2-6) "God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the

LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. {3} The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. {4} He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. {5} The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. {6} Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

Yes, the Lord God will punish sin, he must. Judgment is sure. Hell is real. Eternity is forever. But "*he delighteth in mercy!*" Even now, in the face of such horrible judgment, there is hope. In wrath, he does remember mercy.

## CALL TO REPENTANCE

The Lord God calls us to repentance (2:12-14).

(Joel 2:12-14) "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: {13} And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. {14} Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and

leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?"

In verses 15-17, God's prophet pleads with his people, fathers, ministers, priests, all his people to heed the Lord's call, and plead for his mercy, as Moses' did, for the glory of his own great name.

(Joel 2:15-17) "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: {16} Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. {17} Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God?"

### **GRACE PROMISED**

Then, in the last part of chapter 2, he promises us that as surely as we seek his mercy, he will grant it. (See Hebrews 4:16.)

(Joel 2:18-19) "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. {19} Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied

therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:"

(Joel 2:21) "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things."

(Joel 2:23) "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*."

(Joel 2:25-27) "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. {26} And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. {27} And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed."

(Heb 4:16) "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

**This promise of grace clearly involved the promise of Christ's great accomplished redemption as our Mediator.** Whether Joel understood this or not, I cannot

say. But the Apostle Peter certainly did (2: 28-32; Acts 2:16-36; Gal. 3:13-14).

**\*\*\*\* USE GARETH CROSSLEY'S  
COMMENTS ON THE POURING OUT OF  
THE SPIRIT.**

(Joel 2:28-32) "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* **I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh**; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: {29} And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. {30} And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. {31} The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. {32} And it shall come to pass, *that* **whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered**: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be **deliverance** (**THIS IS CHRIST!**), as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

**DELIVERANCE PROMISED**

In chapter 3, the Lord God promises that he will save, that he will deliver all the hosts of his elect from the nations into which he has scattered them. Though they have forsaken him, he will never forsake them. But, before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come, he will bring again the captivity of Jerusalem. The Lord

will roar out of Zion and gather his people, his heritage, his Israel out of the nations of the world. Then, his Spirit will cease to strive with man, and all Israel shall be saved. **“So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion!”**