

Joel 2:4-11 – Judah’s Day of Judgment: The Army

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Handfuls, Geneva, Delitzsch, JFB, Clarke, Calvin, Henry, Barnes, Henry, Trapp, INT, Poole,

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: It was quite a depressing scene in Judah!

The trumpets announced **God’s war against them.**

They would be **invaded by billions of physical locusts** and then be **invaded by the mighty military locusts**, the army of Babylon.

You have already **heard the details of the physical locusts.** What **was the mighty military of the Babylonian army like** when they invaded Judah, first in 605BC and then completed it in 586BC? This is what you will hear about today.

But there is one thing I want you to be mindful of as we look at God’s judgment on Judah and drawing parallels to today. **Don’t always assume everyone who suffers is facing judgment from God.** Sometimes the innocent suffer from judgment of the wicked. (Noah and his family were locked down in the ark!) But the reason we can compare this suffering in Judah with what we have now **is because the sins of Judah were similar to the sins prevalent among us today...** Maybe we are worse than they...

Our headings are:

The appearance of the army

The action of the army

The accomplishment of the army

Our goals are: That upon **hearing about and seeing God’s just punishment** on the church, you will endeavor to **repent**, get your **relationship restored** with him, and **return to working for him.**

The appearance of the army

4 Their appearance is like the **appearance of horses**; And **like swift steeds**, so they run. 5 With a **noise like chariots** Over **mountaintops they leap**, Like the **noise of a flaming** fire that devours the **stubble**, Like a strong people **set in battle array.**

1. The army of God (or the army used by God) appears before the Jews in overwhelming numbers, power, and look.

Why did they appear this way? Let me illustrate: Policemen going to arrest a suspect always try to show overwhelming force (numbers and equipment) so there is no need for overwhelming force. The person sees the large police presence and equipment and realizes fighting would be useless and surrenders.

This was a psychological battle God was using against his people.

2. Look at the details of the description of the army:

a. The army is like many young horses coming with eagerness, and courage -full of power...running fast. This is exactly how God described the Babylonians later on through Jeremiah (and Habakkuk).

Jeremiah 4:13 "Behold, he shall come up like clouds, And his chariots like a whirlwind. **His horses are swifter than eagles.** Woe to us, for we are plundered!"

The army charges briskly, with strength, and with wisdom.

b. The army makes a great noise like chariots. Noise from chariots is deafening, as is noise from locusts which were the first judgment on the Jewish nation. A large swarm of physical locusts can be heard 6 miles away. Imagine what a great army (military locusts) with chariots sounded like. (See same judgment in Rev. 9:9)

c. The army overcomes mountains, which are considered natural barriers. These mountains protected Jerusalem in the past. But not anymore. Locusts could fly over mountains as well. Look at what Judah is losing!

Psalms 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, **So the LORD surrounds His people** from this time forth and **forever.**

d. The army sounds like crackling fire. Locusts, when their wings start to flap, could sound that way as well. And locusts, like God's army, even devour stubble. Stubble is a most insignificant thing, but even stubble they eat.

e. The army looks like a mighty army set for battle.

6 Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color.

3. Seeing the army, the Jews grimace in pain and lose their color – literally, they become black – having a “death face.”

Isaiah 13:8 And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; **They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth;** They will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames.

And in fact, this is what Jeremiah wrote just before captivity.

Lamentations 4:8 Now **their appearance is blacker than soot;** They go unrecognized in the streets; Their skin clings to their bones, It has become as dry as wood.

4. Lessons:

a. You as an individual can't resist the judgment of God, and neither can the church. Period. It is therefore better to surrender to God and appease him.

b. For judgment on his covenant people, God will use Covid-19, he will use

communists, and he will use capitalists. He is not limited in any way!

c. The only thing that appeases God is when you offer the blood of Jesus Christ to him.
In other words, you confess your sins and say Jesus took all your sins when he died on the cross.

d. Even the strongest national defenses gives no security to a nation. This is a serious warning to our nation. Trusting in wealth, influence, natural borders, past prosperity, or military strength will not protect Canada from God.

The action of the army

7 They run like mighty men, They **climb the wall like men of war**; Every one **marches in formation**, And they do **not break ranks**. 8 They **do not push one another**; Every one **marches in his own column**...

1. What do we know about the action of this army?

The army runs like mighty warriors. They had no fear of any enemy!

This army scales a city wall without difficulty!

This army stays in formation, orderly, so as not to injure each other. Indiscipline destroys an army quickly.

This army does not “break ranks.” They are focused. Nothing will “pervert their plan.”
What a dedicated enemy!
(Physical locusts fly that way as well.)

The army does not push (better word: press) one another, does not unsettle each other— a great feat for a large army.

Just before this, the prophet Nahum described God’s army:

Nahum 3:17 **Your commanders are like swarming locusts**, And your generals like great grasshoppers, Which camp in the hedges on a cold day; When the sun rises they flee away, And the place where they are is not known.

...Though they **lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down**. 9 They **run to and fro** in the city, they **run on the wall**; They **climb into the houses**, They **enter at the windows** like a thief.

2. What do we know about the action of this army.

Their fighting is successful and they do not injure themselves; they is no “friendly fire.” They show their training. And this puts terror in the heart of the Jews.

“**Run to and fro**” pictures total plundering, just as Isaiah had prophesied, gathering

whatever they can.

Isaiah 33:4 And **Your plunder shall be gathered Like the gathering of the caterpillar**; As the **running to and fro of locusts**, He shall run upon them.

So their safe city is not safe for the people. But the Babylonians face no threats. They are free to walk.

“Run on the wall” means they go after all the high towers in Jerusalem. The Jews trusted in their fortified cities, but the Babylonians are skillful and conquer them.

“Climb into the houses” means even their homes are not safe, but are in grave danger.

“Enter at the windows” also means no one is safe. The Babylonians were ready to steal from the Jews.

10 The **earth quakes** before them, The **heavens tremble**; The **sun and moon grow dark**, And **the stars diminish their brightness**.

3. The Babylonians literally put “the fear of God” in man.

They bring earth (land) quakes. These represent the falling away of the religious and political systems of Judah.

Earth quakes do not destroy the earth. **So “earth” is better translated “land.” God was referring to Judah.**

In Revelation you see this when God finally destroyed the Jewish (and Jerusalem’s) way of things – their administration.

In Matthew 24:30, Jesus described the destruction of Jerusalem. Some translation of Matthew 24 say **he will destroy the earth**, so people think he means the whole earth, **but the earth, then like in Joel’s day, described his judgment of Judah!**

They cause heaven quakes and sun, moon and stars grow dark. Again, this is not literal language. Heaven and heavenly bodies can’t shake. If the sun goes dark, we all die! This **language represents high officials and institutions that can shake.** These were **kings, queens, judges, priests,** and other important people.

So there would be a great shake up in leadership and a break-up of the religious and political administration!

And of course, calling leaders by celestial names was normal, just like **Joseph’s dream of the sun, moon, and stars.**

Just like God used hyperbole and figurative language to describe the destruction of Judah, he also used simple hyperbolic and symbolic language to describe the destruction of other cities Tyre, Sidon, and Babylon. Look at Babylon’s destruction described.

Isaiah 13:10 For the **stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give**

their light; The **sun will be darkened** in its going forth, And the **moon will not cause its light to shine**.

So this is not end of the world destruction. (Always compare parts of the Bible.)

4. Lessons:

a. How much do you trust in the stuff you own and have...the bank account, your good health, your home, and your job? The Lord, through his servant tools, could take it away very quickly! Don't trust in them. Trust God.

b. How much is the church trusting in its numbers, its buildings, its organizational structure, etc.? They could all be gone in a flash. Don't trust in the church! Don't believe in the church. Trust God instead. Don't even trust in preachers!

c. If the church won't do God's work, why would God want to keep the church? God does not need anyone or any church!

The Accomplishment of the army

11 The **LORD gives voice before His army**, For His camp is very great; **For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible**; Who can endure it?

1. God is the one who will give power to the physical locusts first, and then the army of the Babylonians later.

And his voice is very great. When he calls, even the animals respond.

Isaiah 7:18 And it shall come to pass in that day That the LORD will whistle for the fly That is in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, And for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 They will come, and all of them will rest in the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all thorns and in all pastures.

And he has all strength.

Exodus 15:3 The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name.

If the Jews were just fighting the Babylonians and not God, they would have had a slight chance of defeating them, but because God was on Babylon's side, or rather, Babylon was working for God and with his power, **the Jews had no chance!**

2. God's justice is great and terrible, who can stop it from coming true?

Amos 5:18 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness, and not light.

3. The Jews would not be able to bear it, and indeed they were sent into captivity for almost 70 years.

And even then, they did not learn the lesson. They were once again taken as captives in

AD70 by the Romans.

Revelation 6:17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

4. Lessons:

a. There is one who will make you be able to face the great and terrible day of the Lord at the end of the world. That one is Jesus. He already faced God's judgment for you on the cross.

b. But there are going to be terrible days in this life too and you must learn to prepare, even to avoid those days. How? Submit to God! Live Godly lives. And when you do sin, appease God with Christ's blood!

Psalms 76:7 You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry?

Conclusion:

God was angry with his church and brought judgment on her, first, by the physical locusts, and then the military locusts. Judah did not care to listen because she was preoccupied with pleasure and profit. The mighty Babylonian army took them into slavery for 70 years.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Consider the troubles we are in! Covid-19 is not the end. There will be more. There must be more. God cannot be pleased with what he sees in the church. Even for faithful Reformed Churches, we have coasted. We have not evangelized as we should. We have not insisted on holiness like we should. Sometimes we have emphasized knowledge of life. And consider the broader church. They are often run by tyrants or without any order. Worship is done by what man wants. Some don't even preach the Gospel anymore or they merely preach moralism. Others think a good church is evidence by mainly diaconal work.

2. Our way out is repentance, repentance based on the blood of Jesus. This repentance must include godly sorrow for sins, hating them, forsaking them, and turning and living obediently before the Lord.

3. Be bold enough to warn those who are treating the Lord with contempt in their life and worship! Love them enough to speak and love the Lord enough to be bold! You owe him! He gave his life for you.

Finally, no one is able to come into God's presence without the blood of Jesus. If you believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins, ask God to accept his blood for your blood. He will give you eternal life.