

Joel 3:18-21 – The Church’s Future

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

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: **Joel prophesied to the Jews in order to encourage them, that even though they would go into captivity because of their sins, God would not abandon them. Rather, God would crush their enemies and return them to Jerusalem so they could rebuild the temple, restore worship, and get ready for the coming of the Messiah to spread his kingdom to the ends of the earth.**

Hearing these things, and showing how he controlled history, God wanted the Jews to **accept their punishment** in Babylon, and **long to return** to God, **to his people**, and **to his land**, and **wait for the glorious future**. Today you will hear a summary of the future of God’s people.

Our headings are:

Propagation of the Gospel

Punishment for the Enemies

Perpetuity of the Kingdom

Our goals are: **That you will be encouraged, even through the present hardships and smallness of the church, that the Lord will eventually free us from our enemies and prosper us so that we may work to advance the church of Jesus Christ.**

Propagation of the Gospel

18 And it will come to pass in that day That the **mountains shall drip with new wine**, The **hills shall flow with milk**, And all the **brooks of Judah shall be flooded** with water; **A fountain shall flow from the house** of the LORD
And water the Valley of Acacias.

1. After Yahweh spoke of the return of the Jews from Babylon and the repairing of the temple, and the restoring of worship, he spoke of the expansion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations through the preaching of the Gospel.

We know this was **the future** because of the language “that day.” That was symbolizing a special, notable day.

We know this was in **the distant future** because it has not happened yet and God’s word always comes true.

2. This Gospel preaching would cause the kingdom to expand and flourish.

God used 4 illustrations of the spread of the Gospel and the sweet benefits they would bring.

a. The mountains would drip with new or sweet wine. An abundance of grape vines brought must joy to the Jews. **Even so the Gospel would bring sweet benefits to the world.**

Isaiah 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the **earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.**

Look at the joy the Gospel brings – using the same analogy.

Isaiah 25:6 And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, **A feast of wines on the lees**, Of fat things full of marrow, **Of well-refined wines on the lees.** ⁹ And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; **We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.**"

b. The hills shall flow with milk. An abundance of milk showed an abundance of animals, a symbol of wealth. **Even so, the Gospel will flow from the churches and bring life, strength, and success.** Believers are called to drink!

1 Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,** ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

c. The brooks would have fresh water. The crops would grow. And an abundance of grains in the fields showed a secure future. Further, water sustains life and cleans man. **Similarly, the Gospel sustains life and washes men so they are clean.**

John 4:14 "but whoever **drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.** But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Psalms 46:4 There is a **river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,** The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

And what joy this brings!

d. A fountain shall flow from the temple and water the great acacias. This is rich! First, this "fountain" shows the volume of **blessings!** Water meant life! (Just like if there were no Nile, there would be no Egypt.) Second, this shows the **far-reaching nature of the Gospel.** This water would flow to the Valley of the Acacias. This was in Moab, a Gentile land. Third, this water would flow to a most barren and dry place. The Valley of the Acacias was near the Dead Sea. **So the Gospel would spread far and wide, even the most spiritually destitute place.**

Zechariah 14:8 And in that day it shall be **That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem,** Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.

Ezekiel described how these healing waters would flow from the temple in Jerusalem. It

flowed everywhere!

Ezekiel 47:1 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, **flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.**

God simply used these 4 pictures with which is people were familiar so his meaning would become clearer: The future of the Jews was bright.

3. How can we summarize what the Gospel would do?

Isaiah 55:1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. 3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you — The sure mercies of David.

The Gospel would lead to an abundant life and the people would then worship the Lord.

4. Lessons:

a. Pray and work for this blessings to come on the church of Jesus Christ. This is God's plan. Let me get personal!

b. Young or old, does the Gospel flow from your lips to lead men to life? It is the only way the peoples of the world would be washed clean, nourished, and be blessed! When was the last time you talked to someone about Jesus?

c. This Gospel will spread to the ends of the earth. This Gospel **must spread to the ends of the earth.** It will, with or without you, but won't you rather have a part, knowing what Jesus has done for you?

Punishment of the Kingdom's Enemies

19 "**Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness,** because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.

1. Egypt and Edom, two of the most implacable enemies of God's people, were used in a figurative way to represent all the enemies of God's people.

Egypt: Most know Egypt kept Israel as slaves and slaughtered their newborn sons, but what about Edom?

Edom: Edom was founded by Esau, Jacob's brother. He vowed to kill Jacob, the one

chosen by God to receive God's blessings! At one time **Edom rebelled against Israel and slaughtered many Jews – children of Jacob.** And **because Edom was related to Israel, it made their crimes worse!** Look at what God said to Edom!

Obadiah 1:10 "For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.

Esau even fought with his brother before they were born.

2. The enemies of God's people are sentenced to desolation-emptied of their people-because of their crimes against God's people.

God's people had offered blessings to both Egypt and Edom, but they both slaughtered the people of God anyway.

This same judgment is threatened later to the Romans and the Jews who would slaughter God's people.

Revelation 16:6 For **they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,** And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." 7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

3. Lessons:

a. Pray for and desire the destruction of the church's enemies so she can be free to spread the life-giving Gospel of Jesus. But keep in mind it is not for you bring justice. Vengeance is the Lord's!

b. The enemies' strength can't stop God from punishing them. They may wag their fingers at God, but God sits in the heavens and laughs. They may trust in their military strength and they can fire a weapon from thousands of miles away and hit a target **but God can move the earth and make them miss!** He can confuse their understanding. He can take their lives! Rejoice!

c. If nations are wise, they would protect Christians so the Gospel could spread without undue hardships!

Perpetuity of the kingdom

20 But **Judah shall abide forever,** and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21 "For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted (before); For **the LORD dwells in Zion.**"

1. Jerusalem and Judah, which were figuratively used for the church of Jesus Christ, would exist forever.

And Jesus, the Son of David, would be King!

Ezekiel 37:25 "Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and **they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever**; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.

All their sins would be forgiven...their idolatry...their Sabbath breaking...their abuse of the widows, orphans, and foreigners... God would take them back and establish them! What forgiveness!

Amos 9:15 I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

2. The ground for the eternal kingdom is the sins of the citizens would be forgiven – cleansed.

The only ground of forgiveness is the blood of Jesus Christ. Neither good works nor goats would do it.

Zechariah 13:1 "In that day **a fountain shall be opened** for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **for sin and for uncleanness.**

3. And God would continue to dwell in Zion, his church, forever.

God could only live in a clean church. God desires to live in a clean church.

4. Lessons:

a. The ungodly may seem to survive and prosper for a time, but the church will and can never be destroyed, but she must remain clean.

b. Have hope when you see the persecution of the church by false religions and evil civil governments. The gates of hell cannot prevail against God or his church.

c. And yet, remember even the most wicked can be brought in the kingdom when his sins are forgiven. Be patient as you work toward this end. Never stop offering the wine, milk, and water of the Gospel! As long as there is life, there is hope. Love them to the very end.

Conclusion:

Even though the church was small and would even get smaller in captivity, God promised Judah a bright future. Upon their return to Jerusalem, the Gospel would spread and nourish the world, their enemies would be destroyed so they would enjoy safety, and their restored kingdom would last forever.

Beloved in the Lord:

1. Don't worry that the church is struggling now from self-inflicted and outside attacks. All the enemies from inside and outside will be destroyed. God said so.

2. Keep your eyes on your Savior, the Lord Jesus. Draw strength from him. He saved you and

he will keep you. Read his Word. Talk to him. This (and only this) will make your relationship stronger.

3. Let the wine, the milk, and the water of the Gospel flow from you so the world would be nourished and be saved. If you can't go, send others with your money, your encouragement, and your prayers.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, here is what the Christian will have: Revelation 22:1 *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.* That "Lamb" is Jesus who gave his life for his children. Do you want that water of life to drink...that Good News? Yes? Drink and live. That lifesaving drink is summarized in a few words: Jesus died to take the place of sinners.