

Prepare for the day(s) of the Lord:

Joel 2v18-3v21

This is the second half of a whistle-stop two week series in Joel! We need to use broad-brush strokes as there's lots of ground to cover...!

We had a brief re-cap from last week, noting that Joel wants us to learn the lessons of history. To remember a present judgment in chapter 1 and know that the judgment to come will be far worse. We saw that essentially this long passage is the Lord **responding** to their petition - we looked at it under three thematic headings:



The Lord responds in jealousy

Jealousy is an appropriate response for the Lord who is protective of his people. He responds in jealousy towards his land and people in 2v18 in removing their suffering, as well as when he looks ahead to judgment against the nations for how they have treated his people (notice the repetition of my in 3v2-3). There are similar patterns in the NT when for example Jesus asks Saul (later Paul) why he persecutes him - even though it's his *people* that he's persecuting. This truth ought to give Christians real comfort in the midst of hardship at the hands of others, as well as challenging those who persecute the people of God.

The Lord responds in justice

Chapter 3 springs out of 2v31-32 and reveals the Lord's justice against the nations, and particularly those who have harmed his people. The nations are called to gather in a valley and face God's judgment. The language here is hard for us to swallow (v12 & 13 for example), and yet as the bible develops and unfolds the concepts intensify. Revelation 14 for example picks up these ideas and we read of a terrible outworking of the Lord's final wrath against those who have opposed him. The right response is for us to weep.

The Lord responds in generosity

In the midst of some very disturbing chapters we see glimpses of hope and light. The **first** is that we have warning about this judgment to come. In fact we are sent to take that warning with us. Acts 2 uses Joel 2 to describe the new age of the Spirit being poured out - the Spirit who makes us 'prophets' as we speak of what's to come and of the need for people to take refuge in Jesus. Romans 10 also uses Joel 2v32 to describe the ministry of Paul in being sent to take and preach the message of the gospel. The **second** is simply the offer of refuge and blessing. We noted how v16-21 describe the heavenly Jerusalem and outlined a secure and safe people, a place of abundance and the Lord seen to be with his people - ruling from Zion.

Here are some possible thoughts and questions.
Please be selective and adapt them for your group:

Possible Questions

How do you feel about God's judgment? Why?

When is jealousy wrong? When is it right?
What does it mean that the Lord is jealous for his people?
Read Acts 9v1-5. What's the surprise?

What response ought this truth to provoke for Christians? For non Christians?

How does the Lord's final justice make us feel? Why?

In what ways do we see the Lord's generosity in Joel 2-3?
Look at Acts 2 v17-21 and Romans 10v12-17.
How is Joel being used here?
What ought our response to be?

Read Joel 3v17-21: What strikes you about the picture Joel paints here? What excites you?

What 1 thing can you take away from this study?
Share it with the group and pray for each other.