

JOEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Joel chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we begin this fascinating and prophetic book. As we study the book of Joel I think God gave to His people back then and to us a look at the big picture. Many times when we are in the midst of a situation we miss the big picture and we only see the present problem.

Let me explain it like this. Imagine that you are a young child and you have this infection in your leg. So your parents take you to the doctor and that is already making you scared. Now as the doctor examines you he tells your parents that this infection must be removed and thus, they will have to lance it to drain that infection.

All you hear is, “You are going to cut me open!!!” And yes, that is what the doctor is going to do but in the end that what the doctor does now will bring healing later. That is the big picture but all you can see, and rightly so, is that the doctor is going to take that scalpel and cut into your skin!

I think that is how we view the chastening of God upon our lives many times. God will chasten us to heal us but we just look at the present situation and we don’t like it and rightly so. But we must look at the big picture. I like the way one writer put it as he wrote regarding the book of Joel and the big picture,

Disaster strikes the southern kingdom of Judah without warning. An ominous black cloud descends upon the land – the dreaded locusts. In a matter of hours, every living green thing has been stripped bare. Joel, God’s spokesman during the reign of Joash (835-795 B. C.), seizes the occasion to proclaim God’s message.

Although the locust plague has been a terrible judgment for sin, God's future judgments during the day of the Lord will make that plague pale by comparison. In that day, God will destroy His enemies, but bring unparalleled blessing to those who faithfully obey Him.

- The Open Bible Expanded Edition, p. 895

So as we look at this world, as we look at our nation, as we look at our own lives, may we have the big picture because if we don't, we are going to become discouraged, down and we can lose focus of God, we can forget that He is in control! And I do realize that this is just a short three chapter book but don't let that fool you. This little book of Joel is like an atom bomb, small but powerful!

Now before we dig into this book let me share with you something that Montague S. Mills said regarding this book. He wrote,

Joel, . . . was probably the first of the so called writing prophets [only Obadiah prophesied before his time, he prophesied in 845 B.C.]; so this book provides a valuable insight into the history of prophecy, particularly as it furnishes a framework for the end times which is faithfully followed by all subsequent Scripture. God started a new work with the writing of Joel, that of preparing the human race for the end of this temporal era, and thus gave an outline of his total plan. Later prophets, including even our Lord, would only flesh out this outline, but in keeping with the divine nature of true Scripture, never found it necessary to deviate from this, the initial revelation.

- Believer's Bible Commentary, p. 1107

Now as we begin in Joel, keep in mind that he is writing on the heels of a devastating locust plague. It would be like someone writing a letter to the people of California after a devastating earthquake, something that has never occurred at this magnitude to get their attention. And that is what Joel will attempt to do with the hope of opening their eyes and causing the people and the nation as a whole to repent and turn to God.

One last point before we begin this book and that is this prophet's name, "*Joel.*" I like his name because it means, *YAHWEH is GOD!*

What a perfect name for someone who is to redirect the people back to God and prevent further judgment from coming upon them. With that as our background let's begin reading in Joel chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

JOEL

VERSE 1

1. The call of Joel is given to us here and we don't have a lot of information regarding this prophet of God. You see, it is not really about the prophet of God but the God of this prophet and the same is true in our lives. It is not about us but the God we serve and we need to remember that fact or we will get ourselves in trouble!
2. The book of Joel is a very difficult book to date because the only information we are given is he is the son of Pethuel. We also know that he speaks of the Temple and thus, the Temple was in existence as well as the city of Jerusalem.

That means that this book was written before 586 B. C., the year the Babylonians came in and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Most scholars believe that the writings of Joel occurred somewhere between 835 B. C. and 796 B. C., which was when the boy King, Joash ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And keep in mind that it is the Southern Kingdom of Judah that Joel is speaking to.

3. Now just a little insight into what was going on just prior to this period of time. Keep in mind that Joel is writing on the heels of a lot of turmoil and transition in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

The queen mother, Athaliah had seized power as the King in Judah after her son, Ahaziah, was killed in battle. At his death Athaliah killed all the heirs to the throne, the sons of Ahaziah except one, he was hidden in the Temple from her. This little child, only one year old at the time was hidden for six years from Athaliah until he was placed on the throne at the age of seven!

But during those six years she was on the throne Athaliah brought wickedness to the nation and I guess we can understand that since she was the daughter to Ahab and Jezebel. They were like the demonic duo of the Old Testament and Ahab was one of the worst and most wicked Kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

Now as Joash is placed on the throne Athaliah is put to death for her rebellion. Now that may seem harsh since this was Joash's grandmother. But keep in mind that to keep her alive it may give her another opportunity to try and usurp the throne.

She led the nation in Baal worship just as her mother had done in Samaria. This was due punishment for her actions, just as we saw with her mother, Jezebel! It is as Patterson and Austel wrote, “Thus Athaliah, the most infamous queen of Judah, died at the hands of her executioners, much as did her mother, Jezebel, queen of Israel.”

So Joel comes on the scene now, on the heels of this wicked queen being put to death and Joash coming on the scene as King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. That is the timeframe we are looking at.

VERSES 2-4

1. Notice what the Lord is doing here, He is trying to awaken them from their spiritual slumber, it is a wake-up call. Sometimes we become so dead to the things that are happening around us we need to have someone shake us up and tell us to look again.

And here we see God calling out through the prophet Joel to see with their eyes the things that have come upon the land and is directly affecting their lives. They had never seen anything like this before, this locust judgment was the worst ever. Not even the plague in Egypt could compare to what this was like. Yes, they had problems with locust infestations from time to time, but not like this. This went far beyond anything they had ever seen. It was a time for a great awakening and the lessons learned should not be forgotten but passed onto future generations!

Now you may be wondering why God would want future generations to know of what happened in the past, these days of devastation and destruction? So that their children and their children’s children may learn the lessons that God was teaching them. There are consequences to sin as Judah found out and they paid the penalty for it.

So the warning is simple and is for them and their children and their children's children, don't travel down the same path, learn the lesson! That is what Paul said in Romans 15:4, "**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**"

And tragically these lessons from God's Word, even the lessons we learn in our own lives are not passed down to our children, they are forgotten. And if we don't pass on the lessons God has shown us to our children and our children's children we will see a generation of people fall away from God, as we have seen with the baby-boomer generation and now the Generation Xers!

Remember when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land and they placed 12 stones, which they took from the midst of the Jordan, and placed them in Gilgal, on the west side of the Jordan River.

I know, that sounds strange but as strange as this task may sound, listen to why it was done. In Joshua 4:21-24 we read, "**Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, "What are these stones?" then you shall let your children know, saying, "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land"; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.'**"

It was a reminder of what happened in the past to encourage them in the present of God working with His people. And make no mistake about it, we are living in a time when our children need to hear about God and what God has done in our lives as memorials to them.

And don't tell me that God hasn't done anything in your life. You are a child of God, aren't you? Start there and let your children see that so they may see the mighty hand of God and have that reverential fear towards the Lord! If we don't have time for the Lord, neither will our children. We are living epistles before them.

2. Now what are they to tell them about? **“What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.”** Joel 1:4.

Obviously this is a judgment of God, but what does it mean? What Joel seems to be speaking of here is the various stages of the locust's life cycle! The different forms they take on and the different characteristics of each. And some of these may grow as large as 10 inches long! Sorry, I'm either calling Orkin or getting a gun! Now these stages seem to be summarized like this:

A. CHEWING LOCUST - PALMER WORM - (GAZAM): It means to gnaw off.

B. SWARMING LOCUST - LOCUST - (ARBEH): It means to be many, migratory.

C. CRAWLING LOCUST - CANKERWORM - (YELEQ): It means to lick off.

D. CONSUMING LOCUST - CATERPILLAR - (CHASIL): Means to devour, consume.

Now, once in a while, and we are not totally sure why, these locusts become more aggressive. It may be related to a hormone that is secreted or released when there is overcrowding of these creatures, but we are not sure, and whatever the case, these locusts become ferocious in their behavior and their appetite. They not only eat the plants, but even down to the roots, destroying the land.

And there can be anywhere from 1 million to a billion of these locusts flying through the sky, and because of their large numbers, they can occupy a space of 10 to 12 miles in length and 4 to 5 miles in width and thus, they are so thick they can block out sunlight causing the skies to darken, making it dark in the middle of the day!

Not only that, but each locust can eat its own weight in vegetation per day. That may not seem like much, but when you consider the large numbers of these creatures, you can see how they can strip the land bare! And as they fly in their tight military-like units they make a sound that is almost deafening! Have fun sleeping tonight!

3. Listen to what took place in the Middle East back in 1915. James Montgomery Boice wrote,

In 1915 a plague of locusts covered Palestine [Israel] and Syria from the border of Egypt to the Taurus mountains. The first swarms appeared in March. These were adult locusts that came from the northeast and moved toward the southwest in clouds so thick they obscured the sun. The females were about two and one-half to three inches long, and they immediately began to lay eggs by digging holes in the soil about four inches deep and depositing about 100 eggs in each. The eggs were neatly arranged in a cylindrical mass about one inch long and about as thick as a pencil. These holes were everywhere. Witnesses estimated that as many as 65,000 - 75,000 eggs were concentrated in a single square meter of soil, and patches like this covered the entire land from north to south. Having laid their eggs the locusts flew away.

Within a few weeks the young locusts hatched. These resembled large ants. They had no wings, and within a few days they began moving forward by hopping along the ground like fleas. They would cover four to six hundred feet a day, devouring any vegetation before them. By the end of May they had molted. In this stage they had wings, but they still did not fly. Instead they moved forward by walking, jumping only when they were frightened. They were bright yellow. Finally the locusts molted again, this time becoming the fully developed adults that had invaded the land initially.

According to a description of this plague by John D. Whiting in the December 1915 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*, the earlier stages of these insects attacked the vineyards.

“Once entering a vineyard the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bare bark. When the daintier morsels were gone, the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches, which, after exposure to the sun, were bleached snow-white. Then, seemingly out of malice, they would gnaw off small limbs, perhaps to get at the pith within.”

Whiting describes how the locusts of the last stage completed the destruction begun by the earlier forms. They attacked the olive trees, whose tough, bitter leaves had been passed over by the creeping locusts. “They stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark.” They ate away “layer after layer” of the cactus plants, “giving the leaves the effect of having been jackplaned. Even on the scarce and prized palms they had no pity, gnawing off the tenderer ends of the sword like branches and, diving deep into the heart, they tunneled after the juicy pith.”

This is precisely what Joel and his contemporaries experienced in their day, and the various stages of the molting insects probably explain the four different Hebrew terms Joel uses.

In the Authorized Version the Hebrew words are: “palmer worm,” “locust,” “cankerworm,” and “caterpillar.” The New International Version says: “locust swarm,” “great locusts,” “young locusts,” and “other locusts” for lack of adequate English words. Probably these are all stages of the same insect, and if so, Joel certainly captures the nature of the utter destruction by reporting, no doubt with perfect accuracy.

- James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, pp. 101-102

4. Now keep in mind that as real as the locust infestation was the Lord is going to use this and speak to them about the Babylonians coming down upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and stripping the land bare. This is the judgment of God upon a nation who refused to return to the Lord and continued in their sin!

VERSES 5-7

1. We see here that the first people Joel lists that are affected by this locust plague were those who drank wine, why? The locusts destroyed the vines, thus, no grapes and no wine! And notice that it is a wake-up call to these drunkards, to awaken out of their spiritual stupor and see what has taken place and why.

Yes God is against drunkenness but please understand that this is just the symptom of a bigger problem. What is that bigger problem? Their turning from the Lord! You see, their relationship with God was off and thus, their entire life was off you might say and drunkenness was just one of the symptoms of not following the Lord!

2. As you look at verses 6 and 7 of Joel chapter 1 you see that this invading locust army is really a picture of an invading army, the Babylonians as I have said. And as you read this you see that this invading army keeps coming and coming like a locust infestation.

One wave after another, they just keep coming and coming, devouring everything in sight. Interestingly enough, the description of their teeth is perfect even though they had no microscopes to examine them and see the fine detail of their teeth. Locusts have a saw tooth like pattern to their teeth, which are very sharp, like a lion's. In fact, at night, when you are trying to sleep, when you have one of these huge infestations, you can hear them chewing! Doesn't that just make you want to shiver!

And that truly was the Babylonians, they devoured nations and people like these locusts did plant-life!

3. Now back in verse 5 we saw the literal vineyards spoken of that they were destroyed by these locusts. But here in verse 7, as he speaks of this destructive army that is coming down, he is not talking about fig trees and vineyards anymore.

The reason I say that is he uses the word “My vine” and “My fig tree.” He uses a possessive pronoun, and thus, this is speaking of God’s people, Israel, the Jews. And as we look at the Scriptures we can see that they are spoken of many times in this symbolic manner.

In Hosea 9:10 we read, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.”

We see this illustrated for us again in Psalm 80:8, where we read “You have brought a vine out of Egypt; you have cast out the nations, and planted it.” And there are many other references in the Scriptures that point to this illustration for Israel.

So what does this all mean? I believe God is speaking of His judgment being poured out upon His people and His land to bring them to repentance, and in doing so, to reach that place of repentance, they will be bare, stripped of all they once had.

And we have seen that through our studies in the Old Testament. We have seen that many times God has to break a people before He can heal them. He has to root out, plow up the garbage before He can plant. He has to destroy our fleshly desires before He can build us up! And the key is that God is doing this to make us into vessels of honor, used for His glory!

And keep in mind that God does not do this because He hates us but because He loves us and wants what is best for our lives.

VERSES 8-12

1. Again we see a call for them to awaken and mourn because of the devastation that these locusts have caused. Joel tells Judah that they should look at their condition and mourn, with all the emotion and passion of a young widow.

And I think God is trying to wake America up but we brush it off, we think of it as nothing and we end up being secure in things that can disappear very quickly. We look at the economy and even the housing market which is improving in some areas and we rest in that. But let me show you how fast things can change from our recent past.

The housing market crash of 2007 was the worst housing crash in U. S. History and it nearly caused this nation to experience another depression like the Great Depression. Let me show you with this timeline of how quickly things can change and I will just highlight the big things, you can look at this on the web page if you want a detailed Timeline for 2007 and 2008.

We are told,

Timeline of Events for 2007

February: Freddie Mac announced that they were no longer buying the most risky subprime.

April: Subprime lender New Century Financial Corporation files for bankruptcy.

June: Bear Stearns announced a loan of 3.2 billion dollars to help bailout one of its funds that invested in collateralized debt obligations (CDOs).

July: The stock market hit a new all-high over 14,000. On July 31, Bear Stearns liquidates two of its mortgage-back security hedge funds

August: A worldwide credit crunch had begun and there were no subprime loans available. Subprime lender American Home Mortgage files for bankruptcy. This marked the start of the **housing market crash**

September: The Libor rate rises to its highest level since December of 1998, at 6.8%.

December: The stock market finishes the year at 13,264.

Timeline of Events for 2008

January 11: Bank of America acquired Countrywide financial for 4.1 billion dollars. Countrywide had a total of 1.5 trillion dollars' worth of loans.

March 16: Bear Stearns on the verge of bankruptcy signs a merger agreement with J.P. Morgan to sell itself for \$2 a share which was fraction of the current trading price.

May 19: The markets had its final day above 13,000 closing at 13028.

September 6: The treasury announced a takeover of both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac that had over 5 trillion dollars in mortgages.

September 14: Bank of America signs a deal to acquire Merrill Lynch.

September 15: Lehman Brothers files for bankruptcy. The Dow drops 400 points closing at 10,917

September 17: The Federal Reserve's lends \$85 billion dollars to American International Group (AIG).

September 18: Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and Treasury Secretary meet with congress to propose a \$700 billion dollar bailout. Bernanke tells congress "If we don't do this, we may not have an economy on Monday."

September 26: Federal regulators seize Washington Mutual and then strike a deal to sell most to J.P. Morgan for 1.9 billion dollars. This represents the largest bank failure in U.S. history.

September 29: Congress votes down the \$700 billion bailout plan. That same day Citigroup acquires Wachovia.

October 1: The Senate passes the \$700 billion bailout bill.

October 3: The house passes the \$700 billion bailout plan and the president signs it into law.

October 6: The fed announces that it will provide \$900 billion in short-term loans to banks. The Dow closes below 10,000.

October 7: The fed announced that it will lend around 1.3 trillion dollars directly to companies outside the banking sector.

October 10: The Dow closes at 8451, the stock market has had its worst week ever losing 22% over the past 8 trading days or 8.4 trillion dollars from the market highs in 2007.

October 14: The Treasury taps \$250 billion of the bailout fund and uses the money to shore up the nation's top banks.

December 31: There were over 3 million foreclosures by this year. Florida, Arizona and California had rates of 4% with Nevada at 7.3%

- <http://www.stockpickssystem.com/housing-market-crash-2007/>

So what are we to do? As a nation, return to the Lord. As individuals, return to the Lord.

Our only hope is in Him and not ourselves or anything else. May we learn the lesson!

2. Now back to Joel. So far we have seen a call to the elders, then to all the inhabitants of the land, those who are drinkers of wine, and now he calls for the priests to mourn because they no longer can offer grain and drink offerings to the Lord, which tells me the Temple was still standing. But at this point their religious activities were just that, all action and no relationship. It was a ritual and it meant nothing to them.

People go to church today because that is what you are supposed to do, right? Wrong! You go because you want to worship God, you love Him. Now if you told me 36 years ago that I would be doing this and loving it, wanting to teach every day God's Word to people, I would have said you were nuts!

But that was before I met the Lord and now it is a joy. But again, here, like with many today, it was just a ritual to them, no one was standing in the gap for the people, not even the priests. That is why judgment has come upon them. He even calls for the farmers and fruit growers to call upon God! Everyone!

3. The close of verse 12 of Joel chapter 1 says, “**Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men.**” Why is their joy withered away? Because when fellowship with God is forgotten, when our hearts are far from Him, the joy we once had is gone, it is withered away. That joy will dry up or shrivel up when we distance ourselves from God, when there is a loss of communication with our Lord.

You see, the joy we once had just fades away because we have left the one who gives us that joy. It was far deeper than just the devastation of the locusts that had destroyed their lives, it was because they were spiritually dry, barren.

And when you take your eyes off of God, you lose that joy, you become self-centered, and your relationships are all messed up! So what do you do? Listen to this acrostic to help you get back on track and it is an easy one. If you lost the joy, remember the **JOY!** Listen carefully and you will see what I mean.

J = JESUS FIRST

O = OTHERS CENTERED

Y = YOU

If you get that right you truly will have the joy of the Lord in your life once again. That dryness you once had, that bareness you once had will be replaced with a freshness that He can only give!

VERSES 13-14

1. Joel wants the people to have a national repentance but who are to be leading the people in this repentance? Joel tells us that it is the priests who are to be leading the people back to God. You see, God's cleansing must begin with those in charge and it is then filtered down by example to the people. He wants them to cry out to the Lord. The call is to gather everyone together, repent of their sins, and return to the Lord.

Peter tells us in I Peter 4:17, "**For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?**"

It is time for us to get serious about our walk and repent of our sins and ask God to use us as an agent that He can work through to reach people by, to be an example and to show people what God has done in our own lives and how much He loves them and what He has for them, the gift of life through His Son Jesus Christ! We can come on our own or God will chastise us, trying to draw us back to Him. He will do His own house cleaning you might say!

2. As we read on we will see that Joel is going to take this local situation, this local judgment of God and he will jump on into the future. He will speak of a future day of world-wide judgment from God known as the *Day of the Lord*, which is not one day but it is speaking of a day of judgment, the judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world. Thus, this speaks of the Tribulation Period and the return of Jesus Christ!

VERSES 15-20

1. Again, when we speak of the Day of the Lord we are not speaking of a literal day but a period of time known as the Tribulation Period or that seven year period of time when God pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

And as you look at this period of time, it is spoken of as being dark, gloomy, it is a day of wars, world-wide famine, pestilence, cataclysmic events occurring on the earth and in the sky, it is the day of the Lord and it will come!

Listen to what Isaiah has to say regarding this time known as the day of the Lord. In Isaiah chapter 13, beginning in verse 6 we read **“Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, every man’s heart will melt, 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. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. 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. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.”** Isaiah 13:6-13.

Obviously not a pretty picture nor is it intended to be! And please don’t miss the point here. This is a time of judgment against sinners, not against those that love the Lord, those that have been cleansed by Him.

Remember that we are in Christ and because of that relationship with Him we are seen as sinless, in a positional sense. Hebrews 10:17 says “... **‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’**” But on a practical basis, in our day to day living, we sin, we fall short, but we are also forgiven, ours sins have been paid in full by the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

Jesus cried out “**It is finished!**” or “***TETELESTAI!***” He didn’t say “My part is now done, now it is up to you to finish your part! Good luck!” If that were the case we would be in trouble. But it is the finished work of Christ, and I am thankful for that truth. Thus, this judgment is against a Christ rejecting world, which we are not part of, our citizenship is in heaven, we are only pilgrims and strangers just passing through!

Remember in I Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul is speaking of the Day of the Lord and he tells us that we are not of this day, it is for a different group of people. We are in a dispensation or period of time known as the Age of Grace or the Church Age.

Thus, prior to the Day of the Lord beginning the Church or the Bride of Christ will be removed, we will meet the Lord in the air and it is called the rapture of the Church!

Now the Jews, during the time of Jesus, didn’t see the Messiah coming twice, first to save that which was lost as the Lamb of God coming to take away the sins of the world. And then a second time in judgment against a Christ rejecting world and to establish His Kingdom on this earth, coming as the lion from the tribe of Judah.

But that is not how they always felt, they did believe in two Messiah's as Mark Eastman and Pastor Chuck Smith point out in their book, *The Search for the Messiah*. They said,

According to their speculations, the suffering servant, called Messiah Ben Joseph, would be killed in the war of Gog and Magog. The triumphant, ruling and reigning servant, called Messiah Ben David, would rebuild the temple and rule and reign in Jerusalem. This belief eventually became firmly rooted in the Talmud. (The Talmud was the authoritative body of Jewish tradition).

- *The Search For Messiah*, p.12

But, because they weren't looking for a suffering servant, they wanted someone to free them from Roman bondage, they held onto the conquering Messiah only and deleted those passages that spoke of the Messiah being a suffering servant, claiming it was speaking of Israel.

That is why the apostles wanted to be next to Jesus on the throne, they were waiting for Him to set up His Kingdom. But what did Jesus teach regarding this issue?

Look at Luke chapter 4, as Jesus begins His ministry, starting in verse 16 where we read, **“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”** Luke 4:16-21.

The problem here is if we go to where Jesus was quoting from, in Isaiah 61:1-3, He didn't finish the verse, He stopped at a comma, not a period. Notice that this comma has lasted some 2,000 years now, and what follows the suffering servant who came to save that which was lost is a **“... day of vengeance of our God ...”**

You see, when the day of grace is completed and the Church, the Bride of Christ is raptured or caught up to be with the Lord, then the Day of the Lord begins. It is also known as the Tribulation Period and you can read of the things that take place during this time in Revelation chapter 6 through Revelation chapter 19.

Now some feel that this Day of the Lord extends all the way through the Millennial Reign of Christ and thus, as we go into Revelation chapter 20 we move into this Millennial Reign and then Great White Throne Judgment and then the Day of the Lord will be complete. It is like the Jewish day. It starts out in darkness, in the evening and ends in the light just as the Day of the Lord begins in darkness and ends with Jesus on the throne and then the Eternal State with a new heavens and a new earth with a new Jerusalem!

The reason many feel that it extends into the Millennial Reign of Christ is because of what Peter says in II Peter 3:10-13 regarding the Day of the Lord, **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”**

So yes, it is a time of judgment, darkness. Isaiah 2:12 tells us, **“For the day of the Lord of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up - And it shall be brought low.”** But out of that darkness there will be great light as Jesus returns and sets up His Kingdom on this earth and rules and reigns for 1,000 years!

Now keep in mind that the Tribulation Period or the 70th week of Daniel relates specifically to the nation of Israel, the Jews. Listen carefully to what Daniel 9:24 says, **“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”**

It is also a time of God’s wrath being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world, not against His bride, as II Peter 2:9 tells us, **“then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”**

2. As we can see, Joel is using a past local judgment, the total devastation of a locust infestation to point us to a time of world-wide judgment, world-wide devastation upon the land and its inhabitants. But God continues to cry out to us in all of His grace to turn to Him and repent, that we might be counted worthy to be spared of His coming judgment. It is up to us.

Listen to the warning to those who refuse to listen and obey and the blessing to those who do. In Exodus 20:5-6 where we are told **“... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”** We truly have a gracious and merciful God who loves us more than we will ever know, if people would just turn to Him and receive His gift of life that is wrapped in Christ.

3. As I close this evening let me close with this from Luke 13:1-5 where we are told, **“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’”**

Why in the world did I share that verse? Very simply. You see, the issue is not why did this happen to them but are you ready for such a disaster in this fallen world? Are you ready to meet your Maker?

None of us know how long we will live but we can surely know where we are going when this life is over. If you have repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, you will be with Him. Absent from the body and present with the Lord.

If you refuse to repent and turn to the Lord you will spend eternity apart from Him and ultimately in the Lake of Fire! Are you prepared to meet your God?