

Bible Study Notes

for



Joel, Jonah, & Habakkuk

Rich Jacobs, M.D.

*Crossroads Church
September 2022*



Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Joel

Joel 1,1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

- 2 Hear this, O elders,
And listen, all inhabitants of the land.
Has *anything like* this happened in your days
Or in your fathers' days?
- 3 Tell your sons about it,
And *let* your sons *tell* their sons,
And their sons the next generation.

Comments:

- The identity of the author of the book of **Joel** is not known. His name was “*Joel*”, which means “Yahweh is God”, and his father’s name was “*Pethuel*”, which means “God’s opening”, but nothing else is known about him. Joel basically is a letter written to the elders and inhabitants of Israel (“*the land*”), from God, through the prophet.
- This book, almost more any other book in the Bible, is about “*the Day of the Lord*” (NASB, **Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:1; 3:14**). This phrase is used in the NASB translation of the Bible 21 times, 13 times in the Old Testament, 5 of which occur in **Joel**. Although **Joel** begins as a narrative about a literal locust plague during Joel’s lifetime, its poetic and broader context clearly unpacks something even more ominous; an end-times day of war, judgment, darkness, desolation, but also deliverance. This is what the final “*Day of the Lord*” will be like. It is critical for the student of eschatology to understand the “*Day of the Lord*”. Basically, it is a day of divine reckoning, but to understand that completely, one must understand the full sweep of Biblical history.
- We do not know exactly when **Joel** was written. The opinions of theologians vary between the 2nd to the 9th centuries B.C. Although arguable, it seems a date from before the Babylonian exile (*i.e.* before 605 BC) makes a the most sense. Joel refers to the Jewish Temple and the Levitical priesthood as though they had not been destroyed yet (**Joel 1:9, 13; 2:17**), although a reference to the Assyrian invasion, from the 8th century BC might still be possible. Also, the “*Day of the Lord*” theme is similar to what other pre-exilic prophets wrote (see **Lam 1:12; 2:1, 21-22; Ezek 7:19; 13:5; Zeph 2:2-3**). Of course, a post-exilic date, such as during the 2nd century B.C., cannot be excluded, but the comparison between a future (for Joel) Babylonian invasion, the locust invasion, and the context of the verses, seems to make this case. Unfortunately, Israel has been subject to many foreign invasions in its history. Remember that prophecy can address many similar events that occur at different times.

Joel 1,4 What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;

And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;

And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

5 Awake, drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you wine drinkers,
On account of the sweet wine
That is cut off from your
mouth.

6 For a nation has invaded my land,
Mighty and without number;



Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,
And it has the fangs of a lioness.
7 It has made my vine a waste
And my fig tree splinters.
It has stripped them bare and cast *them* away;
Their branches have become white.

Symbolic Language: Fig Tree, Vine, & Trees

Christ and His Church is symbolized by the “*vine*” ([John 15:5](#), etc.) in the Bible, while Israel is symbolized as the “*fig tree*”. ([Hosea 9:10](#); [Jeremiah 8:13](#); [24](#), etc.) Trees can symbolize the nations of the world ([Isaiah 55:12](#); [Ezekiel 17:24](#), etc.)

Comments:

- A locust is a grasshopper. In these verses, **Joel** describes the various stages and behaviors of the insects, as well as their impact on human society. Locusts are relatively solitary insects that congregate in huge numbers when a significant rainy season follows a drought. The young nymph locusts have no wings, so they are probably the “*creeping locusts*” ([v. 14](#)) that **Joel** mentions. Huge swarms of the nymphs form and mature to acquire wings, allowing them to fly long distances to spread the locust plague across a large geographic area. Both the wingless nymphs and the winged mature locusts consume all vegetation in their paths. They literally strip the land bare of plants and grains. Locust plagues can devastate large areas of Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. They are mentioned throughout the Old Testament and were a feared part of life there. (See [Ex 10:19](#); [Lev 11:22](#); [Deut 28:38](#); [1 Kings 8:37](#); [2 Chron 6:28](#); [7:13](#); [Job 39:20](#); [Psalm 78:46](#); [109:23](#); etc.)
- These locust plagues created disasters to the economy and population. They consume crops in the fields, all the grass, the leaves from trees and even the bark, fabrics, grain in silos, and most other vegetable products. Economic ruin, famine, starvation, and death can result from these plagues.
- **Joel** prophetically compared a locust plague to the predicted invasion of Israel by a foreign army. The army is compared to the countless locusts that cannot be stopped. They overcome all defenses and bring devastation, desolation, famine, starvation, and death in its wake. He compares a locust plague to war.
- The predicted invading army is also compared to one of the most feared predators in the Middle East in Joel’s day: the lion ([v. 6](#)). The Asiatic lion was present in Israel and the Middle East until about 1200 A.D., when they were hunted to extinction. Lions in Israel are mentioned in various parts of the Old Testament (see [Gen 49:9](#); [Num 23:24](#); [24:9](#); [Deut 33:20](#); [Judg 14:5-18](#); [1 Sam 17:34-36](#); [2 Sam 17:10](#); [23:20](#); [1 Kings 13:24-18](#); etc.).
- **Joel** has an end-times flavor to its prophecies. Perhaps the invading locust army, with teeth like lions, is the same one envisioned in [Revelation 9:1-11](#). This army is summoned from the “*bottomless pit*” ([Rev 9:1](#), Greek: *phreatos tys abussou* (φρέατος τῆς ἀβύσσου), with the Fifth Trumpet Plague, as an army of “locust-horse spirits”, with hair like women, fangs like lions, and tails like scorpions that can sting men to inflict five months of pain that cannot be escaped, even with death! This is no human army. It is an invasion of evil spirits that are unleashed on the land in the final days. Their commander’s name is *Abaddon*, which means “Destruction”.
- [Verse 7](#) comments on the destruction of the “*fig tree*” and the “*vine*” (see [verse 12](#), below, also). Both of these plants can symbolize Israel in the Bible. Figuratively, the invading army desolates Israel, leaving only a remnant of bare branches. In the end-times, it is this remnant of Israel that finally embraces Jesus and is redeemed to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom. (See [Hos 6](#); [Zech 12-14](#); [Rom 11](#); [Rev 12-18](#), etc.)

Joel 1,8 Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth

For the bridegroom of her youth.
9 The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off
From the house of the LORD.
The priests mourn,
The ministers of the LORD.
10 The field is ruined,
The land mourns;
For the grain is ruined,
The new wine dries up,
Fresh oil fails.
11 Be ashamed, O farmers,
Wail, O vinedressers,

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

For the wheat and the barley;
Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

- 12 The vine dries up
And the fig tree fails;
The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,
All the trees of the field dry up.
Indeed, rejoicing dries up
From the sons of men.

Comments:

- **Joel 1:8** uses “bride-bridegroom” imagery to the revelation of it prophetic locust disaster. Of course, the marriage plans of a young couple would be disrupted by a locust plague, especially in an agrarian society. The bride, anticipating her marriage, would mourn the apparent postponement of her wedding day. The invasion of an enemy army, together with its destructive activities, would have a similar effect on the wedding. But the Bible uses these two words, “bride” (Hebrew: “*kalla*”, כַּלָּה; Greek: “*numphae*”, νύμφη) and “bridegroom” (Hebrew: “*chatan*”, חַתָּן) more often symbolically than literally. Through the lens of the New Testament, we now see clearly that the “bride” symbolizes God’s people, whereas the “bridegroom” symbolizes the Lord. The marriage represents the sacred, loving, covenant relationship between God and His people. But **Joel** gives us the perspective of the bride in the midst of unprecedented tribulation. “She” is in distress because of the afflictions of disastrous circumstances and she is longing for her husband to come to take her away. Jesus used this very allegory frequently (see **Matthew 25; Mark 2; Luke 5**) to refer to His deliverance of the Church from (not before) the tribulation of the end-times. (See **Matthew 24:9-16; 20-22; 29-31**). Thus, the “*Day of the Lord*” is not just about warfare and tribulation, but also it is about deliverance, resurrection, and rapture for the saints.
- These verses also reveal the desolation that takes place for the “land” (v. 10, “*adamah*”, אֲדָמָה) which probably refers to the entire earth, rather than just the “land” (“*eretz*”, עֵרֶץ) of Israel”, based on the Hebrew word used here. Joel refers to a global calamity that includes Israel, I think.
- Notice that the Jewish priesthood is adversely impacted by the tribulation (v. 9). In fact, it appears as though the sacrifices and offerings in the Temple will cease. For this portion of Joel’s prophecy to be relevant, there would have to be a functioning Levitical priesthood serving in a Temple (“*house of the Lord*”), something that now does not exist (2022). Assuming **Joel** does elucidate end-times events, one must assume the Temple and priesthood must first have resumed before any trouble could be impactful. The Babylonian invasion (605 BC) accomplishes this too.
- It is worth comparing these ideas to what is revealed in **Daniel 9:24-27**. The prophet Daniel teaches that the sacrifice and grain offering will be halted midway through the last seven end-times year because of a unique abomination that will lead to desolation. The Apostle Paul says what this inciting abomination will be. According to Paul, a man will take up residence in the Temple of God (yet to be built), claiming to be God (**2 Thessalonians 2:1-4**). Of course, any man other than Christ, claiming to be God, is an abomination; he will be Antichrist. He will be the “*Abomination of Desolation*” (see **Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14**). **Joel** gives us more insight into this desolation that occurs because of this abomination. As we will see later, it is a consequence of warfare and divine wrath, as it will be “*destruction from the Almighty*” (v. 15).
- **Joel 1:12** uses “vine-fig tree” and “trees of the field” symbolism to indicate something more than just severe agricultural blight from the “*Day of the Lord*.” The “vine” often refers to the universal Church, including both Christ and the saints from all races, nations, and ages. This is most clearly understood through the teachings of the Apostle John (see **John 15**). The “fig tree” often symbolizes religious Israel, which may be seen more clearly in the Apostle Luke’s writings (see **Luke 13:6, 7**), which Christ later curses for not producing any good fruit (see **Matthew 21**). Thus, in the “*Day of the Lord*”, both the vine and the fig tree will wither, possibly from apostasy (see **2 Thessalonians 2**) and great persecution and martyrdom (see **Revelation 6:9-11**). The symbolic value of “trees” is more easily appreciated when one reads that the “trees of the fields” are said to be “clapping their hands” in celebration, when Messianic peace finally embraces the world (**Isaiah 55:12, Ezekiel 17:24**).
- Although the saints are delivered from the judgment and wrath of God in the “*Day of the Lord*” (see **1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 5:9**), the nations are judged and destroyed, represented as trees that are consumed by fire (v. 12, 19).

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- Joel 1,13** Gird yourselves with sackcloth
And lament, O priests;
Wail, O ministers of the altar!
Come, spend the night in sackcloth
O ministers of my God,
For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God.
- 14 Consecrate a fast,
Proclaim a solemn assembly;
Gather the elders
And all the inhabitants of the land
To the house of the LORD your God,
And cry out to the LORD.
- 15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is near,
And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.
- 16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes,
Gladness and joy from the house of our God?
- 17 The seeds shrivel under their clods;
The storehouses are desolate,
The barns are torn down,
For the grain is dried up.
- 18 How the beasts groan!
The herds of cattle wander aimlessly
Because there is no pasture for them;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer.
- 19 To You, O LORD, I cry;
For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness
And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.
- 20 Even the beasts of the field pant for You;
For the water brooks are dried up
And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Comments:

- The desolation of this invasion of Israel and Judah is so complete, that it also is compared to outcome of a massive fire (**vv. 19-20**). This happened during the three successive waves of the Babylonian invasion. Fire often is symbolic of divine judgment in the Bible (**Isaiah 4:4; 29:6; 66:16; Amos 1:4; 7:4; Jeremiah 15:15; Ezekiel 28:18; 30:8; Zechariah 13:9; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 3, etc.**). It is a judgment of the land from the Lord and is referred to as “*the Day of the Lord*” (**v. 15**). The fire mentioned by **Joel** may as real as it is symbolic. Warfare often destroys the country in which it is waged, partly by fire. This is particularly true in modern warfare, where explosives and incendiary weapons are used. Nuclear weapons also cause consuming conflagrations. Since this “*Day of the Lord*” may be a future event for the land of Israel, even to us, the destruction by fire of the area should not be excluded.
- As a result of the invasion, famine and drought add to the misery of its destruction. Man and animals alike suffer (**vv. 16-20**). There is not even enough food or drink left to present an offering in the Temple (**vv. 13-14**). Israel is undone by the disaster; her leaders gather to fast and pray for God’s deliverance (**vv. 13-14**).
- Mankind, as God’s appointed overlords of the earth, have the responsibility to care for creation — both the plants and the animals (**Genesis 2:15**). Man has proven to be a cruel and selfish taskmaster and nature has

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

suffered much because our sin. When sinful man wages war, especially against God (as though that were possible!), the beasts suffer severe deprivation and death ([vv. 18-20](#)).

- Although the Babylonians did not have modern weapons, they were known to bring death, devastation, and deprivation to the people they invaded. Joel didn't have to wait for the end-times to experience the misery of war.

Joel 2,1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,
2 A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
So there is a great and mighty people;
There has never been anything like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.
3 A fire consumes before them
And behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them
But a desolate wilderness behind them,
And nothing at all escapes them.
4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like war horses, so they run.
5 With a noise as of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.
6 Before them the people are in anguish;
All faces turn pale.
7 They run like mighty men,
They climb the wall like soldiers;
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.
8 They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path;
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.
9 They rush on the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.
10 Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark

Zion

"Zion" is a synonym for Jerusalem, referring specifically to Mount Zion, located just south of the Temple Mount, Mount Moriah. Mount Zion originally was a Jebusite fortress that was renamed the "City of David" ([2 Samuel 5:7](#)). When Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah, the meaning of Zion was extended to include this, along with other parts of the city. Prophetically, in the "end-times", Zion is the future capital city of Christ's Messianic Kingdom. "Zionism" is a modern political movement, beginning about 1897, that led to re-establishing Israel as a modern nation, beginning in 1947. This modern political movement should not be confused with the prophetic use of the word, "Zion".

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- And the stars lose their brightness.
- 11 The LORD utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?
- 12 “Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
- 13 And rend your heart and not your garments.”
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
And relenting of evil.
- 14 Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent
And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?
- 15 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,
- 16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and the nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom come out of his room
And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.
- 17 Let the priests, the LORD’S ministers,
Weep between the porch and the altar,
And let them say, “Spare Your people, O LORD,
And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,
A byword among the nations.
Why should they among the peoples say,
‘Where is their God?’”

Bride/Bridegroom Language

The Church is symbolically called the “Bride” in the Bible. Jesus is symbolized by the bridegroom. (Ephesians 5:22-23). Notice that the “Day of the Lord” is associated with the wedding, about to take place.

Comments:

- Joel 2:1-17, summarize details about the “*Day of the Lord*”, which results in war between Wickedness and the Lord of Hosts, in the final days. Notice the following characteristics of this end-times conflict.
 - Unique date in all history (Joel 2:2). Although there are have been events that foreshadow this final “*Day of the Lord*”, each being called a day of the Lord, Joel is revealing “THE” final “*Day of the Lord*”; it is a singular, one-time, end-times event.
 - Consider the following examples of prophetic days of the Lord that foreshadows of THE “*Day of the Lord*”.
 - ▶ “The Flood” - Genesis 6:8-9:17
 - ▶ “Sodom and Gomorrah” - Genesis 19
 - ▶ “The Plagues of Egypt” - Exodus 7-12Each of these has the following features in common;
 - (a) divine intervention that judges the wicked (Joel 2:11)
 - (b) grace and deliverance for the righteous, (Joel 2:12-14)
 - (c) a sudden onset, with little or no warning to the wicked (Joel 2:1)
 - (d) a day of clouds and darkness. -(Joel 2:2; 2:10)

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- (e) destruction, suffering, and death before the day - ([Joel 2:3-9](#))
- Pay close attention to [Joel 2:16](#): Notice that this “*Day of the Lord*” anticipates the arrival of the “*bridegroom*” and the emergence of the “*bride*” from her “*chamber*”!
 - It should seem odd that an invasion of a destroying army on a day of gloomy darkness would anticipate a joyous wedding.
 - The word translated as “*bridegroom*” (NASB), is from the Hebrew word, “*chatan*” (חַתָּן), which means “*son-in-law*” or “*groom*”. The LXX uses the Greek word “*nymphios*” (νύμφιος) for “*chatan*” (*bridegroom*). This is the same word that Jesus used to describe Himself at His second coming as the bridegroom, coming for His bride, the Church ([Matt 9:15; 25:1, 5, 10; Mark 2:19; Luke 5: 34, 35; John 2:9; 3:29](#)).
 - The word translated as “*bride*” (NASB), is from the Hebrew word, “*kallah*” (קַלָּה), which the LXX translates as “*nymphae*” (νύμφη), which is the same word sometimes used by the New Testament to describe the Church, the “*Bride of Christ*” ([Revelation 19:7](#)). The “*New Jerusalem*” is sometimes called the “*Bride*” ([Revelation 21:2](#)).
 - The word translated as bridal “*chamber*” (NASB), is from the Hebrew word, “*chafah*” (חַפָּה), which BDB says means “*cover, as a token of grief*” or “*token of death*”. It can also refer to the “*bridal cover*” used in Jewish weddings. I think the LXX translators partly missed the point when translating this Hebrew word into Greek. They chose to translate “*chafah*” as merely “*koitonos*” (κοιτώνος), which means simply “*bed chamber*”. But the “*bride*” in [Joel’s](#) “*Day of the Lord*” is under the threat of death and is grieving! The whole scenario feels out of place. The bride mentioned in Joel’s setting is covered in grief because of the tribulation and terror in which she finds herself. This bride is delivered from this tribulation by the appearance of her bridegroom. Similarly, the end-times Church will be delivered out of great tribulation when Christ returns to rapture her. This deliverance does NOT happen BEFORE her Great Tribulation., as some assert. Better still, she is spared the Lord’s wrath, which judges the world AFTER her deliverance ([1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9](#)). Tribulation is not wrath anymore than trouble is justice.
 - The word translated as “*room*”, describing the abode of the bridegroom, is “*cheder*” (חֶדֶר), which BDB says “*private bedroom, as in a bedroom of kings*” or “*inner chamber*”. Perhaps it is appropriate to call this Bridegroom’s bedroom “*a bedroom of kings*” — He is Lord, Jesus Christ!

Joel 2,18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land
And will have pity on His people.

- 19 The LORD will answer and say to His people,
“Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied in full with them;
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.
- 20 “But I will remove the northern army far from you,
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
And its rear guard into the western sea.
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,
For it has done great things.”

Comments:

- Notice that the “*Day of the Lord*” also is a day of forgiveness and redemption for Israel, called “*His people*” in [Joel 2:18](#). This is not just the “*Church*” in this verse. Notice that they will never again be made “*a reproach among the nations*” - a dominating feature of Israel’s history in exile. Also, the invading army is said to be “*the northern (army)*” ([Joel 2: 19](#)), referring to the invasion route most often used to occupy Israel.
- The destruction of the rebellious army that will attack Israel leaves many unburied bodies and wreckage around it. The result is a “*stench*” and “*foul smell*” that will be present ([Joel 2:20](#)). One possible description of the carnage around Jerusalem from “*Day of the Lord*” battle is outlined in [Revelation 14:18-20](#).

... Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

- Joel 2,21** Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the LORD has done great things.
- 22** Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.
- 23** So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication.
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.
- 24** The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.
- 25** “Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.
- 26** “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
Then My people will never be put to shame.
- 27** “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am the LORD your God,
And there is no other;
And My people will never be put to shame.

Comments:

- The “*Day of the Lord*” will be terrible beyond imagination, because God will deal with all the wickedness that has plagued Heaven and earth since Adam and Eve’s betrayed God in the Garden. As the “Lord of hosts”, while acting in the defense of His remnant people, God will bring an end to Satan’s reign of terror. This unique divine Judgment Day frees Creation of evil’s powers to it may receive and experience God as He really is — a Loving, Blessing, Nurturing God, who is worthy of our faith and obedience.
- When “Wickedness” is vanquished on the “*Day of the Lord*”, the land will be transformed to become more verdant and productive, while the beasts of the field will enjoy relief from misery and famine (**vv. 21-22**). The skies will bring forth the needed rain in each season to renew Creation (**v. 23**). Hunger and disease will pass away in the presence of plenty. (**v. 24, 26**).
- The amazing thing about God’s “*Day of the Lord*” judgment is that, while the unfaithfulness of His people, Israel, will be instrumental in the ascendancy of evil to power, the remnant of His people will be instrumental in the destruction of evil’s power. This is because the *Day of the Lord* is a time when God will winnow His people to “separate the wheat from the chaff”; He will purify Israel to remove the dross from the precious metal. The outcome of this process will bring forth a faithful Israel, fully redeemed and obedient, at the same time as Israel’s enemies are destroyed. This is the day when Israel will know that the Lord is their God. For this, there can be no shame or condemnation.. (**v. 26, 27**). Notice that this is stated symbolically as the day when the fig tree and vine are productive and fruitful. (**v. 22**).
- This is a critical point to emphasize: the “*Day of the Lord*” is the day of salvation for Zion, but the day of destruction for Israel’s enemies. I recommend reading **Isaiah 62:11-63:1-9**, for more on this. It also is closely

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

associated with the resurrection and rapture of the Church (please refer to the Bible study handout on [Revelation](#), for details on this).

Joel 2,28 “It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.

29 “Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth.
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

31 “The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Will be delivered;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As the LORD has said,
Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

Peter's Pentacost Sermon
(Acts 2:17-21)

Comments:

- The Apostle Peter quoted [Joel 2:28-32](#), in his [Pentecost sermon](#), on the day when the Holy Spirit came in power to baptize all who were present ([Acts 2:17-21](#)). Pentecost was a prophetic foreshadow of the blessings that will follow the future “*Day of the Lord*”. Following the terrible days of war on heaven and earth, and Christ’s victory in that war, mankind will experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit, with all the associated gifts and manifestations. Freedom from the influence of the vanquished evil spirits will secure the blessings of Christ’s victory.
- In [Joel’s](#) version of the “*Day of the Lord*”, the promised deliverance and blessing of God will focus on Mount Zion, Jerusalem, and on “*those who escape*”, or the “*survivors*” — *i.e.* the remnant of those days.
- The order of events associated with the “*Day of the Lord*” was revealed to us by Jesus.
 1. Tribulation will be the plight of saints because of their faith throughout history ([Matthew 24:9](#)), preceded by wars and false prophets and false messiahs ([Matthew 24:4-8](#))
 2. Tribulation will suddenly escalate to threaten the existence of all believers when the “*abomination of desolation*” arises ([Matthew 24:15](#)), also prophesied by [Daniel](#) ([Daniel 11:31](#); [12:11](#)), which will mark the last 3.5 years of Seventieth Week of Daniel ([Daniel 9:24-30](#)). This “*abomination*” is the man, Antichrist, sitting in Jerusalem’s rebuilt Temple, claiming to be God ([2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 9-10](#)).
 3. With Antichrist in power, “*Great Tribulation*” for the saints begins ([Matthew 24:21](#)) because they will not worship him; it is unique because, left unchecked, it will eradicate the people of God from the earth, leaving the world with no witness for God ([Matthew 24:22](#); [Revelation 6:9-11](#)).
 4. Fortunately, this “*Great Tribulation*” is “*cut short*” when Christ returns with all His angels and resurrected saints to rapture the living saints. On the day of this rapture, “*immediately after the tribulation of those days*”, the sun and moon are darkened, accompanied by other miraculous signs. ([Matthew 24:29-31](#); [Revelation 6:12-14](#)).
 5. Shortly after the darkened cosmic sign, the events quickly leading to the “*Day of the Lord*” transpire as “*Trumpets of Wrath*” ([Joel 2:31](#); [Revelation 8-9](#); [11:14-17](#)). It is worth noting that the Fifth Trumpet of Wrath unleashes a demon army of locusts from the bottomless pit, along with smoke that darkens the sky and sun, resulting in desolation of the land ([Revelation 9:1-11](#)). Perhaps the darkened sky associated with the resurrection and rapture foreshadows the Trumpets Bowls Judgments darkening?

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- These verses in Joel end with the terms of God's grace (Joel 2:32). In the midst of these terrible events, "whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered." That anyone would NOT call on the name of the LORD in this day is proof of how reprobate they have become! But for those who have called on the LORD, they will receive the fullness of His Holy Spirit (vv. 28, 29).

Joel 3,1 "For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

2 I will gather all the nations
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
Then I will enter into judgment with them there
On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
And they have divided up My land.

3 "They have also cast lots for My people,
Traded a boy for a harlot
And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

4 "Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head. **5** "Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples, **6** and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory, **7** behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head. **8** "Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation," for the LORD has spoken.

Comments:

- The "Judgment of the Nations" takes place in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" ("God has judged", Joel 3:1-3; 12). Jesus taught about this Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. The basis of this judgment will be how the peoples of the nations treated God's people, including Israel. According to Christ, the uncaring and cruel peoples Jesus calls "goats", while the compassionate and kind peoples He calls "sheep". For this reason, the "Judgment of the Nations" is sometimes called the "Sheep and Goats Judgment". The kindly "sheep nations" are blessed and remain in Christ's Millennial Kingdom, while the evil "goats nations" are sentence to destruction and perdition.
- The valley is identified as being part of the Kidron Valley, which runs along the eastern border of Jerusalem. It also was the place where the Moabites and Ammonites came to make war against King Jehoshaphat, during the 9th century B.C. (2 Chronicles 20:1-30, which resulted in a complete rout of Judah's enemies. The valley is mentioned in Zechariah 14, as a place of judgment for the "peoples" (nations).

Now this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. It will come about in that day that a great panic from the LORD will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.
Zechariah 14:12, 13 (NASB)

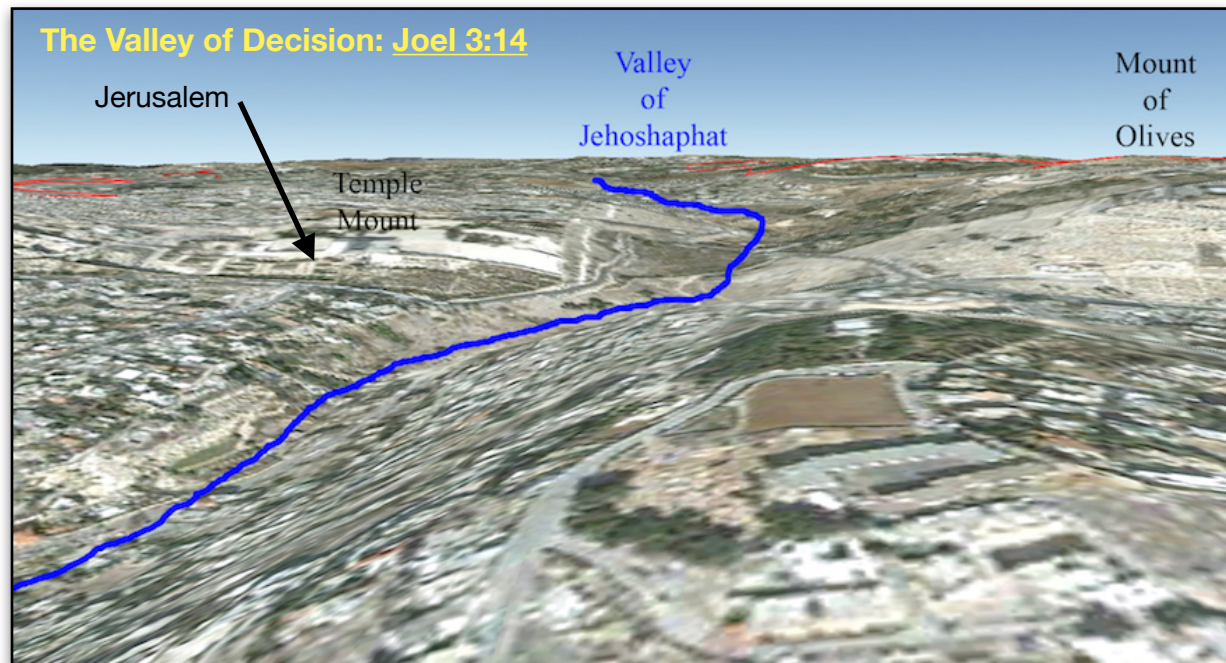
- The 9th century BC "Battle of the Valley of Jehoshaphat" involved traditional enemies of Judah, Moab and Ammon, which are the ancestors of the modern Jordanians. Joel added the regions of Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia to the list, which corresponds roughly to modern Lebanon, Syria, and the west bank Palestinians, also historical enemies of Israel. Since all the "goat-nations" will gather in one place to destroy Israel, they quickly sort themselves out and present themselves for judgment in their battle against the Lord and His people. Their decision to destroy Israel also determines their fate. Thus, the "Jehoshaphat Valley" is Valley of Decision for

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

both the goat-nations and for the Lord's judgment on them ([Joel 3:14](#)). They receive in full measure what they have done to others.

- Joel 3,9** Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!
Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!
- 10 Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."
- 11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,
And gather yourselves there.
Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones.
- 12 Let the nations be aroused
And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,
For there I will sit to judge
All the surrounding nations.
- 13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.
- 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.
- 15 The sun and moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
- 16 The LORD roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But the LORD is a refuge for His people



Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- 17 And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.
Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
So Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers will pass through it no more.

Comments:

- The comments for [Joel 3:1-8](#), apply to these verses also. The nations prepare for war by making weapons. This is what is meant when God says they will beat “*plowshares into swords*” and their “*pruning hooks into spears*”. After the “*Day of the Lord*” judgment of nations, Christ will reign as the Prince of Peace, the nations will “hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” ([Isaiah 2:4](#); [Micah 4:3](#)).
- [Joel](#) compares the blood bath resulting from the “*Day of the Lord*” to wine that flows from the grapes that are harvested and trampled by foot in ancient winepresses ([Joel 3:13](#)). This same symbolism is used in [Revelation 14:19](#).
- The peoples who live around Jerusalem have remained Israel’s enemies for thousands of years. We should not be surprised that these nations ([Joel 3:12](#)) are the ones to come into God’s “*winepress*”.
- [Isaiah 63](#) (below) provides strong prophetic evidence for this assertion, where Isaiah states that Edom (Jordan) — specifically, Bozrah — will be a bloody flashpoint in the battle. (See [Map 1](#)).



Map 1: Edom & Bozrah
See [Isaiah 63:1-3](#), below

*Who is this who comes from Edom,
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,
This One who is majestic in His apparel,
Marching in the greatness of His strength?
“It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”
Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?
“I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment. **Isaiah 63:1-3, NASB***

- The verses in [Isaiah](#) probably describe an early phase of war between “*the nations*” and the Lord, following what I call the “*Battle of Bozrah*”. In this battle, the Lord frees the remnant of Israel from destruction after liberating Jerusalem, engaging Antichrist’s besieging armies at “*Azel*” ([Zechariah 14:5](#), probably in the Jordanian desert), the place of Israel’s “*last stand*”. Following this victory, the Lord then will lead the remnant of Israel back to Jerusalem, where then, the Seventh Trumpet is sounded to declare the beginning of the Christ’s reign on earth ([Revelation 11:15](#)). With this announcement of the Millennium, the nations surviving the Battle of Bozrah, having retreated to Megiddo to refit and reorganize under Antichrist, become enraged ([Revelation 11:18](#)). They will launch a counterattack to overthrow Christ and to destroy Jerusalem, but will be defeated by

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

the “Bowl Judgments” that culminate in the “Battle of Armageddon” ([Revelation 16](#)). These seven bowl judgments appear to follow the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This final, pre-Millennial battle will end the “*Day of the Lord*” judgments. A victorious Christ then will ascend His throne, unchallenged by earthly or heavenly rebels.

Joel 3,18 And in that day

The mountains will drip with sweet wine,
And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD
To water the valley of Shittim.

19 Egypt will become a waste,
And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,
In whose land they have shed innocent blood.

20 But Judah will be inhabited forever
And Jerusalem for all generations.

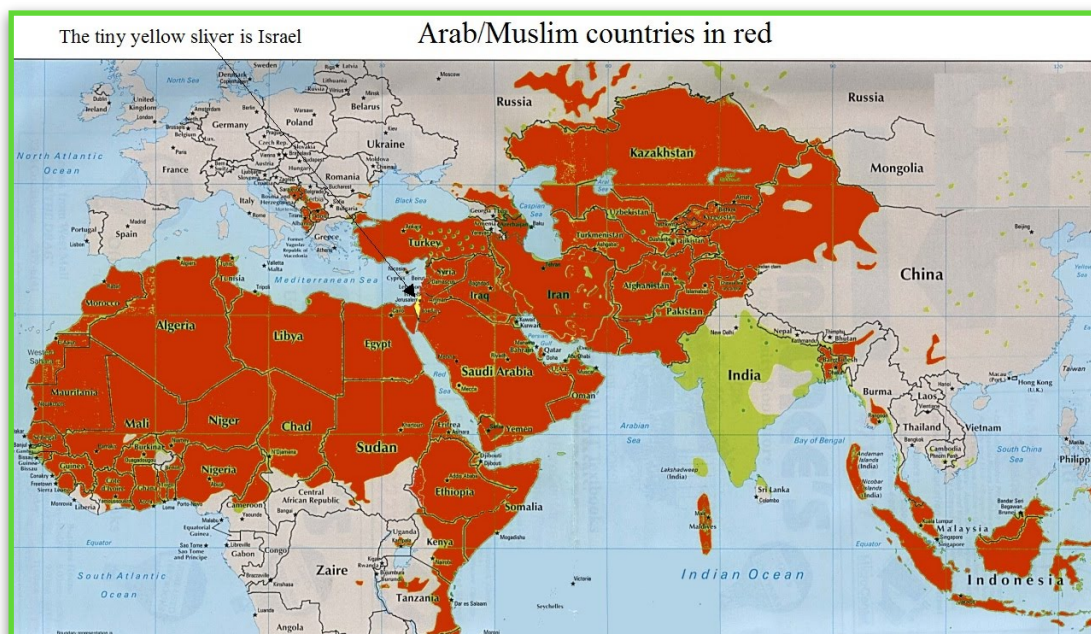
21 And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,
For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Valley of Shittim

Shittim (pronounced “shi-TEAM”) is in Moab (modern Jordan), across from Jericho. Its name means “Valley of Acacias”. The Israelites camped there before crossing over into the Promised Land ([Numbers 22-24](#)). Also, it was the place where Balaam tied to curse Israel.

Comments:

- [Joel 3:19](#) adds Egypt to the list of antagonists arrayed against Christ in the “*Day of the Lord*”. The resulting battle desolates (Hebrew: “*Shemamah*”, שִׁמָּמָה) that country. The same fate will be experienced by Edom, and the other hostile nations surrounding Israel. Recall that the chain of events leading to this final desolation will begin when Antichrist will take his seat in the Temple claiming to be God. This abomination will lead to all this desolation, which is why Daniel called it the “*Abomination of Desolation*”. ([Daniel 11:31; 12:11](#)).
- The victory of Jesus Messiah will establish His people, Israel, in the land “*forever*” (Hebrew: “*olam*”, עוֹלָם - [Joel 3:20](#)). Christ Messiah will dwell in Zion, with His saints, during His Millennial reign. It may coincidence, but many of the nations described as Israel’s end-times enemies today are Muslim nations which surround Israel.



Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Jonah

Jonah 1,1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” ³ But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

✳ **PREFACE:** Consider some possible prophetic parallels between **Jonah** and the history of Israel. As you study the book of **Jonah**, imagine that the reluctant prophet could symbolize Israel, whom God called to be a kingdom of priests (**Exodus 19:5, 6**), charged with leading the nations to faith in God. Consider that Nineveh could represent those unbelieving peoples, even as they were Israel’s enemies. But like Jonah, the fleeing prophet, the people Israel has been unfaithful to the Lord and has not fulfilled their calling. Just as God cast disobedient Jonah into the sea for his disobedience, God has cast unfaithful Israel among the nations repeatedly, even as He said He would (**Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:23-27; 28:25, 37, 64**). Consider the sea in **Jonah** to be symbolic of those nations (**Revelation 17:15**). Thus, through disobedience, Jonah’s time in the sea (**Jonah 2:3**) could represent unfaithful Israel’s exile to the nations. Jonah was swallowed by a “great fish” (**Jonah 1:17**, “*dag gadol*”, Hebrew: דָּג גָּדוֹל). Scripture tells us of another great sea creature, “*Leviathan*”, who is a “*serpent*” or “*dragon*”, like a great fish (**Isaiah 27:1**). Perhaps the “*great fish*” of **Jonah** also represents that dragon? The Bible also teaches us that Leviathan represents Satan (**Revelation 12:9; 20:2**), who now rules the nations of this world (in the “*sea*”). Perhaps **Jonah’s** “*great fish*” symbolizes Satan. Just as the “*great fish*” attempted to devour Jonah, the Bible says Satan will attempt to devour Israel (**Revelation 12:13-16**). In the book of **Jonah**, the prophet, swallowed but not yet digested or destroyed, repented and was delivered from the great fish and from the sea after three days and nights (**Jonah 1:17; 2:10**). In the same way, the end-times remnant of Israel, pursued by Antichrist, will repent of her unfaithfulness (**Zechariah 12:10**) and be delivered by the Lord on the third day (**Hosea 6:1-3**). Jonah was in the sea, in the belly of the great fish for 3 days before he repented and was delivered by God. Future Israel’s remnant, will be cast among the nations and will be facing imminent destruction for 3 days before she repents and is delivered by God. These are striking parallels. When the remnant of Israel is saved from Antichrist and his “nations”, and when she has assumed her position in the Millennial Kingdom as a royal priesthood under Messiah, will she forgive and minister to the very nations who sought to destroy her? This may be the question God is posing to future Israel through the book of **Jonah**? It is a question the Lord left unanswered!



Map: Jonah’s Birthplace

Comments:

- Jonah was from the town of Gath Hepher (**2 Kings 14:25**), located in the territory occupied by the tribe of Zebulun (**Joshua 19:10, 13**), about 3.1 miles north of Nazareth and less than a mile from Cana, in northern Israel (See Map: Jonah’s Birthplace). Jonah lived when Jeroboam II was king of the Northern Kingdom, in the late 8th century B.C. He was a contemporary of the prophets Amos and Hosea. Jonah’s tomb was still alleged to be found there, and was mentioned by Jerome, in the 4th century A.D.
- Jonah was the son Amittai, whose name means “*my true one*”. Jonah’s name in Hebrew means, “*dove*”, which may have prophetic significance, because God sent Jonah as a peace emissary and a messenger of repentance to the wicked city of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and arch enemies of Israel. If Nineveh repented, God would relent from destroying it, bringing it a new beginning. It may be no coincidence that God communicated peace and a new beginning to Noah, following the flood, using a dove (**Genesis 8:8f**). As revealed in Jonah, Nineveh did repent when they finally received God’s word from the reluctant prophet, but the city seemed to have

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

forgotten God's grace and returned to its sinful ways when it was destroyed in 612 B.C., by a coalition of the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians. Before this, Nineveh was the largest city in the ancient world!

- Jonah is the only prophet known to have run from God! He is one of the four prophets mentioned by Christ ([Matthew 12:41](#); [Luke 11:32](#)), the others being Elijah ([Matthew 17:11, 12](#)), Elisha ([Luke 4:27](#)), and Isaiah ([Matthew 15:7](#)).
- Liberal scholars who are prone to deny supernatural events claim that the events recorded in [Jonah](#) are merely allegorical and should not be taken literally. As was mentioned earlier, however, Jesus seemed to take [Jonah](#) quite literally, quoting from it in His teachings. There is no objective or historical evidence that refutes the legitimacy of [Jonah](#). Indeed, the only thing that brings its claims into dispute is unbelief.
- The exact location of Tarshish is unknown, but most Bible scholars believe it was located on the southeastern shore of Spain. The city was documented to be a Phoenician trading post as early as 800 B.C.. If this is where Tarshish was located, Jonah was planning over 2000 miles WEST of where he lived rather than about 600 miles to the EAST, to Nineveh, where God sent him! Some scholars say Tarshish is another name for Tarsus, a city in Asia Minor. If this is true, Jonah was still headed in the wrong direction from Nineveh.
- "*Joppa*" ([v. 3](#)) is the latinized name of the Greek version of the Israelite city of Jaffa, near the modern city of Tel Aviv, Israel.
- As [Jonah 1:1-3](#), records, Jonah had no intention of obeying God. Assyria was Israel's enemy and Nineveh was Assyria's capital city. God wanted to extend His grace to this wicked city, rather than judge and destroy it. Apparently, Jonah held a grudge! He decided to disobey God, as much as it was possible for him to do so. These verses also tell us that Jonah was not just avoiding Nineveh — he also was running from God. This is what we do when we disobey the Lord; we try to separate ourselves from Him.



Jonah 1,4 The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. ⁵ Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. ⁶ So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.”

Comments:

- Seasoned sailors had the “fear of God” because the ship and their lives were imperiled by so great a sea storm. The Bible text is unambiguous — God sent the storm. Why was Jonah not frightened? Although this is not explained in the text, perhaps Jonah knew that the calling of God was irrevocable? ([Romans 11:29](#)) God had called Jonah to witness to the Assyrians in Nineveh; he was not getting away from God's will.
- Notice that, with respect to God, the sailors are as “lost” as the people in Nineveh. They all had their own “gods”. The ship should have been a fertile mission field for Jonah to share the word of God. There is no evidence in the Bible that Jonah was a willing missionary to the sailors either. In fact, Jonah was an example of unfaithfulness to them. It is important for all saints to remember that we will have a testimony to give - and it will be did we obey God, or not. It is far better for us to be found faithful in our service to the Lord! Even through Jonah's disobedience, the sailors learned of God's power because the sea was calmed by God when Jonah was cast overboard. Their gods accounted for nothing.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Jonah 1,7 Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck us.*” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.
8 Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account *has this calamity struck us?* What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” **9** He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

Comments:

- In their panic, the sailors sought to understand the reason for their peril. Surely, so great a calamity must have come from God (or, their “gods”). Casting lots is mentioned many times in the Old and New Testaments. How this was done then is not known exactly now, Most scholars envision throwing down sticks or rocks so that how they land on the ground could not be controlled by the will of man. In this way, “casting lots” allowed God to assign the outcome of a question, without the influence or power of any man. These sailors were casting lots as a means of “divination”, to find the man guilty for angering the gods. Though their process may have been rooted in idolatry, God used it to expose Jonah’s sin.
- Having been “outed” by God, Jonah finally embraced part of his calling by telling the sailors who he is, who God is, and what he believes to be true of God. He was a Hebrew who feared he Lord God who made everything. He finally gave a testimony! But was Jonah behaving like a man who really did fear God? Was Jonah really obeying God as Lord? Jonah’s words and deeds did not present a consistent testimony of a believing sailors.



Throwing down marked stones, something like these, to make a decision “by chance” was an ancient practice.

Jonah 1,10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. **11** So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?” — for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. **12** He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you.” **13** However, the men rowed *desperately* to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming *even* stormier against them. **14** Then they called on the LORD and said, “We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased.”

Comments:

- Learning of Jonah’s disobedience of God, and experiencing His power and wrath first-hand from the sea storm, these sailors rightly now feared God. They sought a way to appease God’s anger without offending Him further. Killing Jonah, whom they learned was a prophet, seemed unwise to them. They feared any God who could bring such a terrible storm upon them.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- Jonah knew the solution; he had to accept accountability for his disobedience to save the ship. He instructed the sailors to throw him into the raging sea. Did Jonah know that God would rescue him or did he expect to perish? The text does not tell us the answer. It seems unlikely that Jonah anticipated what would happen to him next!

Jonah 1,15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. **16** Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. **17** And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Comments:

- Jonah gave them permission to toss him into the raging sea. The sailors knew he was a prophet of the same God who was provoking the storm (**Jonah 1:8**), so perhaps this exculpated them for his murder. Amazingly, throwing the wayward prophet overboard did calm the maelstrom. It seems the astounded sailors adopted the Lord as God — or, at least, added Him to their pantheon (we can't be sure which, from the text). God can use the testimony of even an errant believer to draw people to Himself, although the witness would fare much better in obedience.
- God delivered Jonah from drowning by turning him into “fish food”. The prophet apparently was indigestible and gave the great fish indigestion, because he remained safely in the fish's stomach three days and later, was vomited onto dry land. Notice that the Lord “*appointed*” the fish to swallow Jonah (**Jonah 1:17, NASB**. Heberw: “*manah*”, מָנָה - which also could be translated as “*ordained*”. It seems fair to suspect that everything and everyone has a purpose in God's plan for salvation - fish and sinners. I suspect we'll be awestruck if we ever come to understand how it all fits together.
- We should interpret Jonah's three-day survival in a fish “GI tract” as a miraculous manifestation of God's grace. Though Jonah disobeyed God, he was not destroyed by the Lord. As we will see, apparently, the three days were required for the stubborn prophet to repent, but with repentance came his deliverance from the “deep”. These three days of grace were symbolic and had prophetic significance, which Jesus called “*the sign of Jonah*”.

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” **Matthew 16:4, NASB** (Also, see **Matthew 12:39; Luke 11:29**)

- The Lord taught His disciples that He would be killed and raised from the dead on the third day (**Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22**). Just as Jonah's emergence from the belly of the great fish on the third day rescue him from certain death, Christ's resurrection from the grave awarded Him eternal life on the third day. These “resurrection events” present unbelievers with compelling evidence of God's sovereign power and grace, which are the key elements of Christian testimony (**Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:4**). As I mentioned earlier in these notes, I also think the “*sign of Jonah*” will manifest itself in the salvation of the remnant of Israel, in the last days (**Hosea 6:1-3**). This miracle too will be a sign of God's power and grace to the remnant of the nations.

Jonah 2,1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,

- 2** and he said,
“I called out of my distress to the LORD,
And He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;
You heard my voice.
- 3** “For You had cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
And the current engulfed me.
All Your breakers and billows passed over me.
- 4** “So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’
- 5** “Water encompassed me to the point of death.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

The great deep engulfed me,
Weeds were wrapped around my head.
6 “I descended to the roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars was around me forever,
But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.
7 “While I was fainting away,
I remembered the LORD,
And my prayer came to You,
Into Your holy temple.
8 “Those who regard vain idols
Forsake their faithfulness,
9 But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving.
That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the LORD.” 10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

Comments:

- Jonah compared his situation in the depths of the sea to the “*depths of Sheol*” (**Jonah 2:1**). The language in these verses is similar to the verses found in **Psalms 18, 30 & 69**, which some scholars believe prophetically resemble Christ’s experiences when He descended into Sheol (**1 Peter 3:19-20**).
- The “*pit*” (**Jonah 2:6**, Hebrew: “*shachat*”, חָכַח), comes from a Hebrew word that means “to ruin, destroy, annihilate” (HALOT). *Eerdmans’s Bible Dictionary* says the pit is synonymous with Sheol, the abode of the dead, or perhaps, the inner most part of Sheol.
- Notice that the Lord “*ordained*” (**Jonah 1:17**) the great fish to swallow Jonah, which it did, and later commanded the great fish to “*vomit*” (**Jonah 2:10**) Jonah back onto dry land, which it also did. All Creation obeys the Lord, except for some angels and for mankind.

Jonah 3,1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk. ⁴ Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”

Comments:

- The prophet was rescued from sin and death for a purpose — to proclaim the word of God to the enemies of God and His people! For this purpose are all His saints rescued from death. Notice that God did not “program” Jonah to “robotically” speak His message to Nineveh; the prophet agreed to go this time, though because of God’s disciplinary interventions. God definitely works in the lives of His servants to teach them the wisdom of obeying Him. Faithful obedience is the state of blessing and fellowship with the Lord. Disobedience is the cause for God’s discipline; but God definitely disciplines those whom He loves (**Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6**).
- Nineveh, located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, was one of the largest cities in the 7th century BC world, with more than 300,000 residents (**Jonah 4:11**). Its residents apparently inhabited an area more 30 miles in diameter, well beyond the walls of its fortified central districts. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians invaded and conquered Israel in 722 B.C., which explains Jonah’s grudge against them and his reluctance to minister to the city.
- Jonah’s message to Nineveh was short and bitter. It was something like, “In forty days, your city will be destroyed!” Assuming the Bible text renders Jonah’s complete message, there was no mention of God, no suggestion to repent, and no inkling of God grace and salvation if they did heeded the message. I think it is

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

more likely, given events revealed later in Jonah, that the unforgiving prophet didn't work very hard at explaining God's warning to the Assyrians. Also, I suspect he didn't exert himself vigorously to spread the message to all quarters of the city. When I read Jonah, I get the impression that he offered God the minimum amount of obedience required to "stay out of another fish stomach".

Jonah 3,5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. ⁷ He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. ⁸ "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. ⁹ "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." ¹⁰ When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.

Comments:

- Mass salvation! This is the real miracle in Jonah! The prophet's half-hearted message to less than a third of the city resulted in a radical repentance of everyone in it, from the king, down to the servant. Even animals were brought into the observance of this repentance (Jonah 3:7). Although the Assyrians were polytheists and idolators, they apparently knew who YHWY (God) was and they believe His Word to them.
- As a result of Nineveh's repentance, God relented from destroying their city. In fact, God is not willing that anyone perish, but that everyone should come to repentance! (2 Peter 3:8-10). Repentance must be lived out in a life of faithful obedience, though. History teaches us that Nineveh returned to idolatry and cruelty. Within one generation later, the entire city would be destroyed, in about 612 BC, probably well after Jonah had died..

Jonah 4,1 But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in *my own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. ³ "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." ⁴ The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Comments:

- Jonah's "prayer" was one of protest. Notice that "prayer" is just talking to God. At least Jonah is being honest. There is no religious pretense here. He resented the Assyrians, his mortal enemies, and didn't want God to forgive them. Becoming more emotional and dramatic, rather than rational, Jonah claimed he was so upset at Nineveh's reprieve that he was ready to die.
- Don't forget that God called Israel to be a "*kingdom of priests*", tasked with leading the nations to God (Exodus 19:6). Jonah had forgotten that and his nation never embraced this mission. It was an unfamiliar concept to him. In light of Israel's high calling and Jonah's privileged task, the Lord asked Jonah if he had any (just) reason to be angry? Indeed, should any man argue with God?!

Jonah 4,5 Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. ⁶ So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

happy about the plant. ⁷ But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. ⁸ When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."

Comments:

- Jonah decided to "have a pity party". He was upset that God forgave the city, but he thought he'd hang around a while, hoping their destruction might yet happen. But God was not finished teaching Jonah about His great love and mercy. God gave Jonah a plant to shade him from the hot sun. What comes next is unexpected. A worm!
- God sent the shade-providing plant, but why did he send the worm? The worm did not appear until the next day, giving Jonah quite a while to reconsider his attitude. When Jonah didn't repent, it's not hard to imagine that God would discipline Jonah yet again by taking the plant away — by using the worm. But why a worm? Why not just cause the plant to wither? Although I don't claim to understand this completely, I suspect there is something special going on here. The word translated as "worm" (**Jonah 4:7**) is "*tola'at*" (Hebrew: תולעת), which often refers to a specific species of worm, *Coccus ilicus*, or the "Crimson Worm". An ordinary earth worm or grub is represented by a different Hebrew word, "*rimmah*" (Hebrew: רמיה). The Crimson Worm has a peculiar life cycle and biologic properties that make it a good metaphor for the life and sacrifice of Christ.
- The Crimson Worm contains a carmine-like chemical in its body that is used to create a red dye that people in the Middle East used to color their clothes crimson. The female Crimson Worm only produces offspring once in her lifetime. She does this by firmly fastening herself to an oak tree. Here, she spins a bright scarlet cocoon around herself. Inside this cocoon, the Scarlet Worm lays her brood of baby worms. These babies have no other source of food but their mother - they literally feed off her live body! When the baby worms reach maturity, their mother dies, but in the process, she releases a crimson substance that irreversibly stains all her children scarlet. About **three days later**, the deceased mother Crimson Worm turns pure white and her waxy corpse falls to the ground. Recall that crimson is symbolic of sin (**Isaiah 1:18**), whereas white is symbolic of purity. The life cycle of the Scarlet Worm, whom Jesus said He was (see **Psalm 22:6**, "worm" here is translated from *tola'at*), symbolizes much of what He accomplished on the cross and also our relationship with Him. Christ willingly chose death on a tree for the benefit of the new life this death would bring, just like the mother Crimson Worm. Christ became "crimson" with His own blood and our sin on the cross so that He could put an end to our sin and death and so that we could inherit purity and new life (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). And Jesus commands us to "*eat His flesh and drink His blood*" (**John 6:55**) thereafter, which sustains us until the time of our maturity, just as the offspring of the Crimson Worm eats their mother's body until the time of their maturity. We become transformed by Christ's shed blood, even as the offspring are transformed by the blood-red stain of their dying mother. Finally, though Christ became "*tola'at*" on a tree, in His resurrection on the third day, He became pure white in glorified holiness. The Crimson Worm leaves its tree in death to return to and becomes white as snow on about the third day. In time, each offspring of the Crimson Worm becomes like her and follows her. The LORD God became "*tola'at*" so that our crimson sins can be washed away by His shed blood so that we, like Him, may become "white as snow" and follow Him. Although it's beyond the scope of this commentary, many articles in the Jewish priestly garments were stained with the crimson carmine dye from the *tola'at* worm, having symbolic importance.
- Why did God send Jonah a plant to shade him from the hot sun, only to destroy it with a *tola'at*? Perhaps the Lord was reminding Jonah of Christ's sacrificial offering for Jonah's sins? The same God who extended the grace and comfort of forgiveness had the power to bring suffering of divine discipline. If we imagine that Jonah



The Cocoon of the Crimson Worm

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

may represent the saved remnant of Israel in the Millennial kingdom of Christ, will they remember to forgive and serve the very enemy nations that persecuted them for so long? Perhaps this is the point of the whole book of **Jonah**? Is **Jonah** a letter written by the Lord to the future Jewish royal priesthood that King Jesus intends to use to redeem the post-armed world?

Jonah 4,9 Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death.” ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.” ¹¹ “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”

Comments:

- This message is unmistakable: Jonah enjoyed the blessings of God, though he deserved none of them. This too is true for us. And God wishes to save and bless everyone - man and beast alike (**2 Peter 3:9**). He is a God of Love! (**1 John 4:7,8**). Though God made Israel “His people” for His purposes, His intention all along was to save the world, through Christ and the ministry of the saints. He wants all people to be “His people”.
- Notice that the narrative does not tell us what happened to Jonah. Will he forgive the people of Nineveh and welcome the fellowship of his new Assyrians brothers and sisters in the Lord, or will he continue to nourish his grudges and bitterness? If Jonah represents the future royal priesthood of Israel, will it fulfill its destiny to serve the nations for Christ, or will it continue its stubborn rebellious ways? The book of **Jonah** leaves these questions unanswered.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Habakkuk

Hab. 1,1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

- 2 How long, O LORD, will I call for help,
 And You will not hear?
 I cry out to You, “Violence!”
 Yet You do not save.
- 3 Why do You make me see iniquity,
 And cause me to look on wickedness?
 Yes, destruction and violence are before me;
 Strife exists and contention arises.
- 4 Therefore the law is ignored
 And justice is never upheld.
 For the wicked surround the righteous;
 Therefore justice comes out perverted.

Comments:

- Little is known about the life of Habakkuk, or even, the meaning of his name. Some commentators suggest his name is derived from the Hebrew word “*chabaq*” (חֲבַקֵּק), which means “to embrace” or “to enfold ones arms”. Rabbinic tradition asserts that Habakkuk was the son of the prominent Shunammite woman whom Elisha restored to life (**2 Kings 4**). Perhaps Habakkuk’s name was based on Elisha’s words to the woman, “*You shall embrace a son*”. (**2 Kings 4:16**). His literary style suggests that he was a poet, and perhaps a musician. Most of his prophecy is written in verse, which uses figurative language that is typical of prophecy. Perhaps, Habakkuk took part in Temple liturgical singing (Source: [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)).
- The prophet received an “*oracle*” (Hebrew: “*massa*”, מַסָּא), that caused him to “draw near to God”, or “embrace Him”, as his name suggests, in a lengthy dialog. This is a personal conversation between a man and God. In this sense, **Habakkuk** is unique among prophetic books in the Bible, because he is not speaking to someone else, but with God only. The prophet recorded his conversation for the benefit of others. Habakkuk wrote his prophecy before the Babylonian exile (*i.e.* prior to 605 B.C.). This means he was a contemporary of the likes of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Jeremiah, and Jonah.
- Although God revealed His will through conversation, the prophet wrote that he received the prophecy through what he “*saw*” (**v.1**, NASB. Hebrew: “*chazah*”, חָזָה). This Hebrew word does not require that Habakkuk had a “vision”; he may merely have gained “insight” into what God was going to do.
- Habakkuk asked tough age-old questions of God; “Why are You allowing all this evil?”; “Why don’t You do something about this, God?” The prophet recognized and recounted examples of the wickedness and lawlessness of his fellow citizens. Righteous people remained victims of the unrighteous. Where was God’s righteous judgment, the prophet demanded. God’s answer was shocking; judgment was coming, but not in the way anyone could have anticipated!

Shunem

Shunem was the territory of the kindly Shunammite woman that benefited from Elisha’s miracle and ministry (**2 Kings 4:8-37**). Geographically, Shunem was located in the region where the tribe Issachar dwelt (**Joshua 19:18**), near Mount Gilboa, on the easter edge of the Jezreel Plain, about 5 miles south of Mount Tabor. The modern village of Solem resides there now. The young woman brought to King David in his old age was from Shunem (**1 Kings 1:3**). Shunem was also where the Philistines encamped against King Saul (**1 Samuel 28:4**).

- Hab. 1,5** “Look among the nations! Observe!
 Be astonished! Wonder!
 Because *I am* doing something in your days —
 You would not believe if you were told.
- 6 “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- That fierce and impetuous people
Who march throughout the earth
To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.
- 7 “They are dreaded and feared;
Their justice and authority originate with themselves.
- 8 “Their horses are swifter than leopards
And keener than wolves in the evening.
Their horsemen come galloping,
Their horsemen come from afar;
They fly like an eagle swooping *down* to devour.
- 9 “All of them come for violence.
Their horde of faces moves forward.
They collect captives like sand.
- 10 “They mock at kings
And rulers are a laughing matter to them.
They laugh at every fortress
And heap up rubble to capture it.
- 11 “Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on.
But they will be held guilty,
They whose strength is their god.”

Comments:

- God provided even tougher answers to Habakkuk’s difficult questions. In essence, the Lord told the prophet something like, “If you think there is difficulty and injustice in your life now, get ready, because I am unleashing a violent, arrogant, ungodly cruel nation upon your rebellious people— the Babylonians! (“*Chaldeans*”, [v. 6](#)). God revealed to Habakkuk that, soon, his people and the surrounding nations, would be conquered by these merciless armies. About three (3) generations earlier, the ten northern tribes of Israel had met a similar fate from the Assyrians (732 B.C.). Now, Judah faced conquest and exile by the Babylonians.
- Notice what characteristics God attributes to the Babylonians - anything but godly.
 - They are fierce and impetuous ([v. 6](#)).
 - Arrogant, cruel, and violent ([v. 9, 10](#))
 - Destructive and unstoppable ([v. 8, 10](#))
 - Idolators ([v. 11](#))
- Notice there is a kind of “symmetry” or “balance” to God’s justice. Often, he uses the unrighteous to judge the unrighteous, the violent to judge the violent, the ungodly to judge the ungodly. For example, [Proverbs 26:27](#), says “*One who digs a pit will fall into it. And one who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.*” Although the Lord is not the author of wickedness, he uses it to restrain wickedness and to discipline His people. This form of justice was not what Habakkuk had in mind. He was astonished ([v. 5](#)).

- Hab. 1,12** Are You not from everlasting,
O LORD, my God, my Holy One?
We will not die.
You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge;
And You, O Rock, have established them to correct.
- 13 *Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,*
And You can not look on wickedness *with favor.*
Why do You look with favor
On those who deal treacherously?

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up
Those more righteous than they?
- 14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea,
Like creeping things without a ruler over them?
- 15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook,
Drag them away with their net,
And gather them together in their fishing net.
Therefore they rejoice and are glad.
- 16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net
And burn incense to their fishing net;
Because through these things their catch is large,
And their food is plentiful.
- 17 Will they therefore empty their net
And continually slay nations without sparing?

Comments:

- Habakkuk missed the point. This is because he recognized the evil of the Babylonians (God told him about them and His people would be among their victims), but the prophet failed to see the godlessness, wickedness of Judah. It is characteristic of the human condition to see the sin in others more clearly than in oneself. Jesus warned us of this tendency when He taught, *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”* (**Matthew 7:3-5, NIV**). Hypocrisy proves our fallen condition, even in the midst of our “righteous” judgments of others.
- Israel’s religious ceremonies and rites, including their sacrifices in God’s Temple, could not be substituted for obedient devotion to the Lord. God’s original command to them was *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* (**Deuteronomy 6:5**). This too is true for us. Jesus reiterated this Law, but He summarized the need for men to love one another, as well (**Mathew 22:37**). Our Heavenly Father, who created us and loves us, wants us to love Him and each other. This is “true religion”. Our religious practices, memorials, and activities should merely reinforce and sustain the “Love Principle”, not replace it.
- Adam and Eve were the first humans to try to cover their sins by substituting man-made efforts in place of loving devotion to God, but the outcome of their efforts was the first reported deaths in creation (**Genesis 3:21**). *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (**Romans 6:23**).

- Hab. 2,1** I will stand on my guard post
And station myself on the rampart;
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,
And how I may reply when I am reproved.
- 2 Then the LORD answered me and said,
“Record the vision
And inscribe *it* on tablets,
That the one who reads it may run.
- 3 “For the vision is yet for the appointed time;
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
For it will certainly come, it will not delay.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Comments:

- It seems that Habakkuk hoped that God still would relent from the approaching calamity. But when the Lord answered Habakkuk, He firmly proclaimed the judgment; He will not change His mind.
- The judgments of God not only restore justice, but they also prove the nature and character of God. As a testimony, the Lord caused the prophet to make a permanent record of His judgment (“*Record the vision and write it on tablets*”, [v.2](#)). These were recorded for the benefit of others, who would follow the prophet in history. In a sense, God was proving Himself to others through the foolishness and errors of sinners (see [Ephesians 3:6-10](#)). The Lord’s word to Habakkuk was ordained by God to be part of the Record. And God would use the “Record” to provide the evidence that He alone is righteous, manifoldly wise, omniscient, and sovereign; for Habakkuk, God’s “*vision is yet for the appointed time*” . . . “*it will certainly come, it will not delay.*” For us, it is established history — but also an anticipated future.

Hab. 2,4 “Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.

5 “Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man,
So that he does not stay at home.
He enlarges his appetite like Sheol,
And he is like death, never satisfied.
He also gathers to himself all nations
And collects to himself all peoples.

Comments:

- These verses begin with God’s command to “Behold” the “proud one” ([v. 2:4](#)). The Hebrew word translated as “behold” (NASB) is “*chinnah*” (חִנֵּה), which also could be translated as “Look!”. God wants us to pay attention to and consider this “proud one”, not because he worthy of following or emulating, but because he is dangerous and not what he appears to be! The phrase translated as “proud one” (NASB) comes from the Hebrew word, “*ufflah*” (אֲפִלָּה), which comes from the Hebrew root word that means “to swell up” or “to be puffed up” (BDB). Another word derived from this same root word means “swelling, tumor, hemorrhoid, abscess”! He looks like and is trying to be more than he is, is not healthy, so he is like a cancer or an abscess.
- In pride, trying to appear to be more than he is, this “proud one” is not “right within him”. The word translated as “right” (NASB), is from the Hebrew word “*yashar*” (יָשָׁר), which also could be translated as “straight” or “smooth” (BDB). The “proud one” thinks he is more than he is because he is “crooked”. He is deviant because he is a deviant. Because he himself is “bent”, he cannot live his own life right, nor can he lead others in righteousness. As it turns out, this “proud one” is self-reliant and self-directive because of his pride. Ultimately, from the context of these verses, the “proud one” refers to Satan, but also to everyone who follows his lead or example. Notice that the “proud one” is “gathering” the nations to “himself”; he is leading them and they are following him ([v. 5](#)).
- God wants us to look closely at this “proud one” because He wants us to see that this puffed up crook is a criminal in the Kingdom of God and because he is not what he appears to be. God does not want us to be deceived. He wants us to see clearly that the “proud one” is violating everyone else’s lives (“*does not stay home*”), rather than being accountable for himself, that he is never satisfied and cannot be satisfied, that he is “like death” — indeed, he brings death — and that he is seeking for everyone to join him in his destruction (“*all nations*” and “*all peoples*”). Subsequent verses further define the ultimate fate of the “proud one” so that we might understand his demise. God does not want this to happen to us.
- The “proud one” is contrasted with the righteous person, who lives by faith in God. Knowing that we do not have the wisdom or power to live according to God’s standards and ways, the saints must trust in the Lord to guide them in the “straight” ways. This dependence on God’s guidance and provision requires humility — the opposite of pride. This is why God considered Abraham to be righteous, simply because he believed God ([Genesis 15:6](#); [Romans 4:3](#)). Thus, the righteous shall live by faith — now and eternally. This is the way to salvation through Jesus.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

- Hab. 2,6** “Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him,
Even mockery *and* insinuations against him
And say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his —
For how long —
And makes himself rich with loans?’
- 7 “Will not your creditors rise up suddenly,
And those who collect from you awaken?
Indeed, you will become plunder for them.
- 8 “Because you have looted many nations,
All the remainder of the peoples will loot you —
Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,
To the town and all its inhabitants.

Comments:

- These verses take up a taunt against the “*proud one*” ([v. 2:4](#)), who imposes his control over other peoples forcibly. It describes the activities of a conqueror who enriches himself through looting, theft, exploitation, oppression, and even murder. Throughout history, the men who start wars cloak their true motives and goals with a mask of righteousness, but their personal pride and greed make them puppets of demonic control. Dark spirits control the nations and Satan commands them ([Ephesians 6:12, 13](#)). Antichrists are leaders who have arisen throughout history ([1 John 4:1-6](#)) who seek to destroy the saints and are controlled by these forces. They include men like Pharaoh ([Exodus 2](#)), Haman ([Esther 3](#)), Antiochus IV ([Daniel 11:21-35](#)), various Caesars, Hitler, and countless others. The history of human conflict will culminate when the final Antichrist will seek global control and the extermination of the saints ([Daniel 9; Matthew 24; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13, etc.](#)). This will usher in the “*Day of the Lord*” (see commentary, above, on [Joel](#); also, see [Zephaniah, Isaiah 13, Ezekiel 30., Revelation 6, Amos 5, Matthew 7, etc.](#), for more on this).
- The symmetrical nature of God’s justice results in the criminal being the victim of the same crimes he perpetrates against others ([v. 7, 8.](#)) “*Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them.*” ([Proverbs 26:27](#)) Every man who doggedly pursues estrangement from their God and Creator will gain for himself eternal separation for God and His Light and Life. All the earthly riches accrued in the sinful pursuit of this estrangement will be lost forever. Indeed, these may become the possessions of others. Israel, who as God’s people, have been looted by ungodly conquerors, will inherit the riches of their oppressors when Christ restores them in the Day of the Lord.

- Hab. 2,9** “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house
To put his nest on high,
To be delivered from the hand of calamity!
- 10 “You have devised a shameful thing for your house
By cutting off many peoples;
So you are sinning against yourself.
- 11 “Surely the stone will cry out from the wall,
And the rafter will answer it from the framework.

Comments:

- [Verses 2:9-15](#), outline a series of three “*woes*”. These are expressions of distress and sorrow that draw attention to the painful and undesirable consequences of sin and rebellion against God. [Habakkuk](#) lists specific sins that caused these woes. Greed, and the false sense of self-sufficiency that comes from wealth, distances oneself from the needs and problems of other people. Selfishness ([v. 2:10](#)), conquest, domination of others, even while building cities and monuments to self, especially through violence ([v. 12](#)), leads to isolation. Even enlisting the help of other people to assist one in sin ([v. 2:15](#)) contributes to these woes. Woes can be the natural consequences of transgression and sin because God has designed Creation to reflect His righteousness. For

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

example, sexually transmitted disease can be the consequence of promiscuity. Violence against others can lead to ones violent demise. Woes also can result from the judicial verdicts of God when grace ends.

- Sin causes self-inflicted wounds. Sin is a deeply personal matter that strikes at the core of the sinner, but also harms others. God intends for His children to inherit wholeness and blessing, but our sin repels God's will in our lives; we "sin against ourselves". (v. 10) This is why there are no private sins — there are no victimless crimes.
- Since it is God's will for a perfect Creation, our sin makes His world a victim of our godless rebellion. The scars of our sins become engraved in the perfection of Creation, so even "*the stone will cry out from the wall*" (v. 11). These verses should convince us that we underestimate the calamity our sin brings into the world. They also inform us that we cannot hide our evil "handiwork", nor can we escapes its consequences, even if we build our "*nest on high*" (v. 9).

Hab. 2,12 "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed

And founds a town with violence!

13 "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts

That peoples toil for fire,

And nations grow weary for nothing?

14 "For the earth will be filled

With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,

As the waters cover the sea.

Comments:

- When people pursue ungodly gain under the influence of their sin and dark spiritual forces, they only labor for destruction ("*toil of fire*", v. 13) and wear themselves out with no real profit ("*for nothing*", v. 13). Ill-gotten gain and injustice do not profit the sinner, nor do they build the kingdom of darkness. Instead, these sins eventually testify to the merits of God's righteousness, because they illustrate the folly of all other ways. God's ways are Truth and Love, the only wise ways, which no man can sustain without the help of His Holy Spirit, through faith in Christ.
- All good comes for THE Good. This is an important spiritual principle. The Christian Doxology proclaims that we should praise God "*from whom all blessings flow*". God is the Creator and "*every good and perfect gift*" is from Him (James 1:17). No part of the creation, whether on earth or in the "heavens", is exempt from this truth. God even brings His good out of the evil that others commit, though He has not moved them to wickedness (Romans 8:28).
- Notice that God's goal is to fill the earth "*with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD*" (v. 14). Satan's goal is the obscure this knowledge and to steal this glory, but the Serpent cannot prevail against God. When God does not reveal Himself through His blessings, because they have been refused by rebellious souls, He will reveal Himself through His judgments. His blessings unveil God's love and grace; His judgments make plain His righteous judgments, but also bring blessings to the victims of wickedness

Hab. 2,15 "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink,

Who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk

So as to look on their nakedness!

16 "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor.

Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness.

The cup in the LORD'S right hand will come around to you,

And utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory.

17 "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,

And the devastation of *its* beasts by which you terrified them,

Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,

To the town and all its inhabitants.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Comments:

- It is said that “misery loves company”, so sinners, who bring misery, also seek the revelry of other sinners. Although sin ultimately is destructive, there is a “fellowship” among sinners who engage like-minded transgressions. For this reason, sinners seek to lure other people into their transgressions. The communion of sin may feel like a celebration at the time, but it is filled with shame and disgrace (“*nakedness*”, [v. 15, 16](#)) in the end. No hidden unatoned crime can escape God’s attention when He finally intervenes to make all things right.
- Lebanon, a “nation” that borders Israel’s northern boundaries, suffered immensely when the Babylonians invaded it on their way to Judah, in the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Babylonian army desolated the land, clearing entire forests, slaughtering the animals, murdering defenseless people, and leveling entire towns. They used some of these looted resources to build their own cities, but God told them these would not prosper because they were built on bloodshed ([v. 2:12](#)). God’s “symmetrical justice” would cause the looters to be looted themselves ([v. 8](#)); works of iniquity cannot stand in divine judgment.

Hab. 2,18 “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it,

Or an image, a teacher of falsehood?

For its maker trusts in his own handiwork

When he fashions speechless idols.

19 “Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’

To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’

And that is *your* teacher?

Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,

And there is no breath at all inside it.

20 “But the LORD is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

Comments:

- Idolatry is ridiculous if one considers it carefully. How could anyone come to believe that a rock or piece of metal or wood could be shaped into something or someone that would then become a powerful “god”? Who in their right mind would embrace a log or a stick as their Lord? The reasoning behind this folly runs deep in the soul of sin.
 - First, deceiving, unseen spirits influence the logic and actions of unbelieving men. Behind every idol there sits a demon ([Deuteronomy 32:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 10:20](#)). Idolatry is nothing more than demon worship.
 - Second, the foundation of sin is pride ([Psalm 59:12](#); also, recall the “*proud one*”, [v. 2:4](#)). Proud idolaters spurn God because they think they can “make” their own “gods” (idols). The only thing more exalted than a “god” is a “god-maker”, which they think they’ve become.
 - Finally, idolatry is not just a proud act of unbelieving ignorance, it is a fully-informed act of defiance against the Lord. The idolater proclaims through his acts that he’d rather worship and obey anything or anyone else other than the Lord — even a rock! It is a blasphemous insult to reveals its Satanic origins.
- [Verse 20](#) shatters the demonic spell of idolatry; God is still God! Amen.

Akkadian

Akkadian is an eastern semitic language that was spoken in Assyria and Babylonia from about 2500 BC until the 8th century BC. The Assyrian version of Akkadian was a northern version of the language while Babylonian was a southern dialect. Akkadian is related to Hebrew and other semitic languages. Akkadian was an important language that was widely spoken in the ancient Middle Eastern world. The language was written using cuneiform symbols, made by pressing the ends of reeds into wet clay that later hardened into platelike tablets. Thousands of tablets written in Akkadian have been discovered and decoded by archeologists, giving us a rich understanding of this time and place in ancient history.

Hab. 3,1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. **2** LORD, I have heard the report about You *and* I fear.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy.

Comments:

- Habakkuk's prayer, outlined in these verses, may also be a song, but if it is, it is a dirge. The prophet has a righteous fear of God. The Hebrew word translated as "*Shigionoth*" (NASB) is not clearly understood by scholars. Many semitic language experts believe this Hebrew word was borrowed from the Akkadian word for a funeral song or lament (HALOT). The prophet recognized and accepted the righteousness of God's judgments, but he was mourning the outcome and was moved to seek mercy, based on his knowledge of God's gracious nature.
- Habakkuk also appealed to God for Him to remember His deeds and work in appointing Israel as His own people, for His own purposes, even though Israel had not obeyed its calling, Habakkuk knew God could resurrect His nation in due time ("*in the midst of the years*", [v. 3:1](#)). It seems the prophet may have been asking God to steer Israel back to her destiny, in spite of its disobedience, thus demonstrating His power and omniscience ("*make it known*"). But the evidence from prophetic scripture indicates that Israel will require dire end-times events before it will repent and embrace its Messiah.

Hab. 3,3 God comes from Teman,
 And the Holy One from Mount
Paran. Selah.
 His splendor covers the heavens,
 And the earth is full of His praise.
4 His radiance is like the sunlight;
 He has rays flashing from His hand,
 And there is the hiding of His
power.
5 Before Him goes pestilence,
 And plague comes after Him.
6 He stood and surveyed the earth;
 He looked and startled the nations.
 Yes, the perpetual mountains were
shattered,
 The ancient hills collapsed.
 His ways are everlasting.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan under
distress,
 The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.

Teman

Teman was the grandson of Esau and the firstborn son of Eliphaz ([Genesis 36:15](#)). His descendants, the Temanites, settled in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula in ancient Edom. This geographic region was also called "Teman", which apparently, also had a city called "Teman", though its location today is debated by scholars. [Habakkuk 3:3](#) seems to locate Teman near Mount Paran. [Deuteronomy 32:2](#), suggests that Mount Paran may be in the mountains just west of the Gulf of Aqaba, in the southwest Arabian peninsula. It may be associated with Mount Sinai. The uncertainty about these locations may be part of God's plan because they may be associated the Second Coming of Christ and rescue of the beleaguered remnant of Israel in the end-times.

Comments:

- This portion of the Scripture is sometimes called the "Doxology of Habakkuk". It is the culmination of the prophet's revelation. In [Habakkuk 3:1](#), the prophet prayed for God's intervention, to remember mercy in His wrath, which he was told was immanent. As a result, God showed him the splendor of Christ's Second Coming, which brought judgment against Israel's traditional enemies. This revelation unfolds in the subsequent verses in [Chapter 3](#). It told Habakkuk that when God's end-times judgment is unleashed, it will bring salvation to God's people ([3:13](#)) and will eradicate wickedness from the earth.
- God's final judgment seems to begin among the descendants of Esau, in the regions of Teman, the desert and mountainous regions of Paran, possibly near Mount Sinai, and Bozrah, a city located in Edom, just southeast of the Dead Sea ([Isaiah 63:1](#)). Other Bible verses express God's judgment of these areas (see [Amos 1:12](#); [Isaiah 34:6](#); [Jeremiah 49:13](#)). In fact, the entire prophetic book of [Obadiah](#) singles out Edom (see [Map 1](#), below) for

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

divine condemnation. Although God's hostility against the Edomites is justified by this historical and continual hostility and aggression against His people, Scripture seems to suggest that it also is rooted in God's divine choice and plan (**Malachi 1; Romans 9:13**).

- The distress of God's wrath also impacts "*the tents of Cushan*" (**3:7**). Cush was the grandson of Noah, to son of Ham. Moses' wife, Zipporah, was a "Cushite" (**Numbers 12:1**). The sons of Cush included Nimrod, Seba, Sabatah, Raamah, and Sabtechah (**Genesis 10:8-12**). From these information, and other historical clues, scholars conclude that the Cushites lived in northeastern Africa, near the nations of Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Ethiopia, and the western part of the Arabian peninsula.
- Most Bible scholars assert that Midian (**3:7**) is a region of the northwest Arabian peninsula on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea. The people who lived there were descendants of Midian, the son of Abraham and his wife, Keturah (**Genesis 25:1-2**). Later, the term Midianites became more closely associated with a group of related nomadic tribes that ranged this region. There were closely allied with the Edomites and Moabites during some of their history. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a Midianite priest (**Exodus 2:21**).
- It is interesting to me that the "*earth is full of His praise*" (**3:3**) when God comes in wrath and judgment, bringing pestilence before him and plague after him (**3:5**)! The experience and assessment of God's Judgment is different for the victims of wickedness than it is for the perpetrators of wickedness. God's wrath brings relief and joy to the innocent, but anguish and disaster to the guilty. Viewed in this light, the wrath of God need not be feared by the saint. Christ's Second Coming for judgment actually delivers the Church from His wrath (**1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9**).

Hab. 3,8 Did the LORD rage against the rivers,
Or was Your anger against the rivers,
Or was Your wrath against the sea,
That You rode on Your horses,
On Your chariots of salvation?
9 Your bow was made bare,
The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah.
You cleaved the earth with rivers.
10 The mountains saw You and quaked;
The downpour of waters swept by.
The deep uttered forth its voice,
It lifted high its hands.
11 Sun and moon stood in their places;
They went away at the light of Your arrows,
At the radiance of Your gleaming spear.
12 In indignation You marched through the earth;
In anger You trampled the nations.
13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people,
For the salvation of Your anointed.
You struck the head of the house of the evil
To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.
14 You pierced with his own spears
The head of his throngs.
They stormed in to scatter us;
Their exultation was like those
Who devour the oppressed in secret.
15 You trampled on the sea with Your horses,
On the surge of many waters.

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

Comments:

- These verses use poetic symbolism to describe Christ's Second Coming. Several key points are highlighted here.
 1. Christ, as God, is returning in wrath, not for salvation. It's judgment time. ([v. 9, 12](#)) The term "anointed" is from a Hebrew word from which we derive the title "Messiah" ([v. 13](#))
 2. The Lord is coming again to judge the nations ([v. 12](#)). This is because these "goat nations" have allied themselves with the "head of the house of evil" ([v. 13](#)), who was seeking the destruction of God's people. Presumably, this evil man is the end-times antichrist, possessed and empowered by Satan.
 3. The Lord may be coming in wrath for Judgment, but also will come to save His people from complete destruction and from the wrath that He brings ([v. 8, 13; Matthew 24; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9](#)).
 4. Christ's return is accompanied by physical changes on the earth and in the skies ([v. 9, 10, 11](#)). These changes are described elsewhere in Scripture and include earthquakes, darkening of the sun and moon, thick smoke, and other catastrophic changes. (See class site on the Realm for video on "The Day of the Lord", for more information).
 5. Antichrist is destroyed when Christ returns; he is struck and laid open "from thigh to neck" and "pierced with his own spears." ([v. 13, 14](#)).
- In prophetic scripture, mountains sometimes symbolize the governments of nations. In these prophetic verses, mountains are personified in that they "see" Christ's return and "quake" ([v. 10](#)), as in fear. This is because they know Christ is coming for the judgment of the nations.
- In prophetic scripture, the "sea" ([v. 15](#)) sometimes symbolizes the nations of the earth ([Revelation 17:15](#)). When Christ returns as Captain of the Army ("Lord of Hosts"), he will "trample" the nations ([v. 15](#)). Note that he will do this with "horses", which sometimes symbolize spirits or angels ([Zechariah 1: 6; Revelation 6](#)).

Hab. 3,16 I heard and my inward parts trembled,
At the sound my lips quivered.
Decay enters my bones,
And in my place I tremble.
Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,
For the people to arise who will invade us.
17 Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
18 Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
19 The Lord GOD is my strength,
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
And makes me walk on my high places.
For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

Symbolic Language: Fig Tree, Vine. Olive Symbols

Christ and His Church is symbolized by the "vine" ([John 15:5, etc.](#)) in the Bible, while Israel is symbolized as the "fig tree". ([Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 8:13; 24, etc.](#)). Olive oil ("yield of the olive" can be symbolic of the Holy Spirit ([Luke 4:18; Acts 4:24-27; 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:20, 27, etc.](#)))

Comments:

- Prophecy often addresses many events at many times simultaneously. As discussed earlier, the immediate application of God's prophetic word to Habakkuk was the coming invasion of Israel by the Babylonian army. The prophet understood that he and his people could not escape this fate because they had "earned" this judgment from God. This insight understandably was frightening and distressing to him ([v. 3:16](#)).
- Perhaps Habakkuk suspected the prophetic word also applied to future fulfillments and divine judgments, yet to come. It seems he anticipated these would be times when Israel was stripped bare, like a fig tree that does not blossom, a time when God's faithful people would not be fruitful, and a time when the Holy Spirit would not

Bible Studies in Joel, Jonah, and Habakkuk

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

speak to the saints ([v. 17](#)). These would be the times of deep darkness that precede and anticipate the dawn of the revelation of God's light.

- Habakkuk knew this meant tribulation for God's people and wrath for the unbelieving world. He understood difficult days of distress were in his future. Even so, he also knew that God could protect His people, among whom the prophet numbered himself. Habakkuk's faith declared that he believed that the Lord would strengthen him and set him securely above the approaching storm ([3:18, 19](#)). For this reason, he worshipped God and exulted in His Lord and Savior.
- Jesus told His Church that in this world, we would have tribulation ([John 16:33](#)). He did not exempt the end-times Church from this warning. But Christ also told us to be encouraged because He overcame the world. All saints should be prepared to embrace whatever tribulation God may choose to allow with a resolute faith and the testimony of an overcomer in Christ. This is what will make us effective witnesses for our Lord and Savior. This is our mission in the world.