

Week 6 | The God Who Acts Pt.1—Joel 1:6-7”

I. THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF THIS LOCUST NATION (JOEL 1:6-7)

1. **Joel 1:6-7** “For a nation has come against My land, strong and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion. And he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree: He has stripped it away; It’s branches are made white.”
- B. Here Joel refers to this locust plague as a nation, simply because the numbers are most likely in the millions, and they are unified in their purpose (**Jud. 6:5; 7:12; Isa.33:4**). These locusts have one command; eat everything and leave nothing behind.
- C. The prophet refers to the locust’s teeth like lions’ teeth, not because they actually look like that, but because locust have a similar destructive nature. Just as the lion is the king of the jungle, and has teeth that devour anything, so also do these locusts when assembled together.
- D. Well it’s clear throughout the Bible that God uses vines, and figs, some of Israel’s best producing crops to speak of the Jewish people (**Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-8; Matt. 21:33-46; Lk. 13:6-9**). This wouldn’t be the last time God destroys a fig tree as a prophetic act regarding His own people;
 1. **Mark 11:12-14,20** “Now the next day, when they come from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it...Now in the morning, as they passed by, they (Jesus and the disciples) saw the fig tree dried up from the roots...”
 2. In a time (*Spring/Passover*) when Israel should be budding (*prophetically*), they should be flourishing, but instead, they are blind, and unaware that God Himself is standing among them.
- E. The idea is that the land is totally wasted, utterly destroyed, leaving no leaf, crop, tree or bush and nothing to selvedge for a harvest to come. God has removed every prop, everything that has bolstered this nation, which originally came from Him.
 1. It’s interesting that what was God’s blessing to Israel yesterday, “...beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant...” (**Deut. 6:10-11**), have today become the very thing He’s judging them for.
 2. If the gifts and grace given to you aren’t stewarded well in your life through the Holy Spirit, it can end up being the very thing that God comes back around and judges you for.

II. A THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

- A. Through these two verses the prophet Joel places us in a conundrum (*puzzle, riddle, mystery*). For the first time were starting to understand that God has sent this nation (locust) invasion to them. But on the other hand, God considers the place where the locust have come, “...His land...” and what the locust have destroyed as, “...My (His) vine...My (His) fig tree...” So what it is?

- B. The answer to the conundrum, is yes; God is the One who's sent this locust plague, and He's sent it to His land, to His people;
1. **Jeremiah 5:15-17** *"Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar. O house of Israel, says the Lord. It's a mighty nation...they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread...they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees..."*
 2. **Ezekiel 38:16** *"You (God's army against Israel) will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land..."*
 3. **2nd Chronicles 7:13-14** *"When I shut up the heaven and there is no rain, or command locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves..."*
- C. There's a stark difference between Yahweh and the God of Deism. Yahweh is Creator God, the God of covenant, the God who not only creates all things, but is involved in all things.
- D. Deism on the other hand, presents a god who creates, but then removes himself from creation, and allows life to happen without His divine intervention. *He's not getting involved which means you're on your own.*
- E. The Trinitarian God that Christians follow is Yahweh, not the lesser deity of Deism. Which means we are in relationship with a covenant keeping God, a God who creates, and then steps in and acts within His creation.
- F. This conundrum in Joel's day forces us to wrestle with the nature of God in our day. Is the God of Israel safe? Can we trust a God who chastises His children in disobedience?
1. **Hebrews 12:5-11** *"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: my son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord. Nor be discouraged when you were rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the father of spirits and live? for they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His Holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*
 - a. **Scourge**—This means to flog, to whip, to punish or to chastise.
 - b. **Chasten**—This means to instruct, to train, to educate, as an ongoing matter, to discipline, to punish for the purpose of better behavior, for training, for instruction.
 - (1) **Revelation 3:19** *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent."*
- G. The God that the writer of Hebrews presents is the same God who appears to these 7 Churches in **Revelation 2-3**. Unlike the god of Deism, the God of the Seven Churches didn't only create them, but it also actively leading in their midst, and deeply concerned about what's happening within the ministry;

1. Ephesus—Revelation 2:5 *“Remember...repent...or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from it’s place...”*
 2. Pergamos—Revelation 2:14,16 *“But I have a few things against...Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against you with the sword of My mouth.”*
 3. Thyatira—Revelation 2:20-23 *“Nevertheless I have a few things against you... Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts....”*
 4. Sardis—Revelation 3:1-3 *“...You have a name that your alive, but your dead...strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...Therefore I you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”*
 5. Laodicea—Revelation 3:16-17, 19 *“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy and have need of nothing—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked...As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”*
- H. Why go to all this length to present a God who chastises us? Why spend time talking about a God who disciplines His children in disobedience? Because the thing driving God’s chastisement, the thing driving God’s discipline, is love.
- I. How beautiful that even in destruction, even in the pain of God’s heart, watching His people wander from Him, He still calls it MY LAND, MY FIG and MY VINE.
1. Beloved, take hope, when the God of glory corrects you, when He chastises you, He’s loving you at the same time. You still His! That doesn’t change, though it changes in human interaction in conflict and sin, but not with God.