

# God Pursues Judah

## Summary and Goal

The prophet Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day in which God would judge His enemies, vindicate His people, and restore the world. In light of the coming judgment, Joel called the people of Judah to repentance. As believers who are restored by God's Spirit, we are commissioned to call others to repentance, to spread the good news that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

### ***Main Passages***

Joel 1:1-14

Joel 2:12-14

Joel 2:18,25-32

### ***Session Outline***

1. God calls His people to grieve over their sin (Joel 1:1-14).
2. God calls His people to return to Him in repentance (Joel 2:12-14).
3. God promises to restore His people by His Spirit (Joel 2:18,25-32).

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### ***Theological Theme***

Repentance is grieving over our sin, turning away from our sin and toward God for forgiveness.

### ***Christ Connection***

Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day in which God would judge His enemies, vindicate His people, and restore the world. The only way for us to escape God's wrath on that day is to be found in Christ, who was judged in our place and in whose vindication we share.

### ***Missional Application***

God has given us His Spirit to show that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

## Session Plan

# God Pursues Judah

### *Introduction Option*

Play the video clip “Madagascar battles worst locust plague in 60 years” to show the threatening nature of locust swarms, even for modern-day society.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT0gUjMcQWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT0gUjMcQWk)

### *Point 1 Option*

Ask: Why do we tend not to associate God with the everyday events of life, especially those that occur in nature and among wildlife?

Take several minutes to consider what the Bible teaches about God’s control over nature and the apparently mundane things of life. Assign the following passages to various group members to read aloud:

- Job 37:10-13
- Psalm 104:13-24
- Proverbs 16:33
- Matthew 5:45; 10:29

(You can find a print out of these on the DVD in *The Gospel Project for Adults: Leader Pack*.)

## Introduction

Focus on locusts to begin the session and why people from ancient times have feared them (leader p. 106; PSG p. 83).

- ❓ What is your worst bug story? Why do you think insects cause people so much fear and anxiety?

Speak specifically about locusts in the context of the Book of Joel: the swarming insects were the instrument of judgment in the hand of God. Then summarize the session (leader pp. 106-107; PSG pp. 83-84).

## 1. God calls His people to grieve over their sin (Joel 1:1-14).

Read Joel 1:1-4. Clarify that Joel’s words show God’s active, purposeful involvement in our lives, even in judgment. Then read Joel 1:5-14, and tell how the locust swarm was a wake-up call for the people to recognize their sin (leader pp. 107-108; PSG pp. 84-85).

- ❓ What does it mean to grieve over sin?
- ❓ What is the difference between grieving over the effects of sin and grieving over sin itself?

Highlight that like the people of Joel’s day, our sin has practical and grievous consequences to help us recognize and properly grieve over the sin in our lives, which is a call to action (leader p. 109; PSG pp. 85-86).

- ❓ Take a closer look at the latter part of the passage above. What are some of the actions that were to accompany the emotional aspect of grief from the people?

## 2. God calls His people to return to Him in repentance (Joel 2:12-14).

Talk about the word *repent* and how turning is different than stopping (leader p. 109). Ask a volunteer to read Joel 2:12-14. Focus on two key aspects of what it means to truly turn away from sin and turn toward God (leader pp. 110-111; PSG pp. 86-87):

- **Repentance is an act of the heart expressed in action.**

- ❓ Why is it tempting to *tear our clothes* but not *tear our hearts*?
- ❓ Why must both action and attitude go together?

- **Repentance is received by a gracious and compassionate God.**

- ❓ How does knowing the character of God change the manner in which we repent?

## 3. God promises to restore His people by His Spirit (Joel 2:18,25-32).

Read Joel 2:18, and note that the people must have repented. Then point to an even greater and more lasting future restoration, and read Joel 2:25-32. Provide an overview of the Spirit's activity in the Old Testament (leader p. 112). Elaborate how in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit permanently indwelt the entire believing community (leader pp. 111-112; PSG pp. 88-89).

- ❓ What does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in this fashion show you about the character of God?

Highlight that the Holy Spirit's living inside of Christians is in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and is evidence of the coming Day of the Lord (leader p. 113; PSG p. 89). Use **Pack Item 7: The New Covenant** to show that the indwelling Holy Spirit also connects with the promise of the new covenant (the subject of a later session).

- ❓ Why do you think many Christians find it challenging to talk about the judgment of God?
- ❓ What are some practical but appropriate ways you can present the reality of God's judgment with those around you?

## Conclusion

Challenge the group to share Joel's message with the people around them: The way of escape during the Day of the Lord is available through the cross of Christ (leader p. 113; PSG p. 90). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission"* (PSG p. 91).

### Point 2 Option

Ask: Is repentance a necessary component of the gospel message?

Read the "Essential Christian Doctrine" *Repentance* (leader p. 110; PSG p. 87), and ask the following questions:

- Why might people cringe when hearing the word *repentance*?
- Why is repentance good for us as God's creatures?

### Point 3 Option

Enlist a group member to research and briefly report on the meaning of the biblical phrase "the Day of the Lord."

(Consider providing your volunteer with the article "The Day of the Lord," available through the *Biblical Illustrator* online digital bundle for *The Gospel Project*. Go to [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator) and look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.)

**Christ Connection:** Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day in which God would judge His enemies, vindicate His people, and restore the world. The only way for us to escape God's wrath on that day is to be found in Christ, who was judged in our place and in whose vindication we share.

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**Missional Application:** God has given us His Spirit to show that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

## Expanded Session Content

# God Pursues Judah



### Voices from Church History

“The bedrock of Christianity is repentance.”<sup>1</sup>

—Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

## Introduction

Locusts are a species of grasshopper. Most of the time, locusts are at best a curiosity and at worst a nuisance. From the curiosity standpoint, you can examine the shells they leave behind, stuck to tree trunks. From the standpoint of nuisance, they can often sing loudly, especially when there are a lot of them.

But sometimes locusts move beyond curiosity and beyond nuisance. When the conditions are right, locusts breed abundantly. They move in swarms and rapidly destroy crops. They fly great distances and consume all the green vegetation wherever they settle.

Farmers from ancient times have lived with a fear of locusts. Imagine sitting idly by while a swarm of insects thick enough to darken the sun descends upon the source of your livelihood only to leave it, and your life, devastated because of its appetite. That kind of nightmare has led to scientific monitoring of locusts. Societies do whatever it takes to avoid the havoc a plague like this can cause.



What is your worst bug story? Why do you think insects cause people so much fear and anxiety?

There were no such monitoring stations or preventative measures during the days of Joel. And the land was being consumed before the eyes of Judah. But the prophet Joel helps us see that the locusts were more than an unfortunate circumstance; the swarming insects were the instrument of judgment in the hand of God. As the people sat by and watched their land be consumed, the prophet Joel pointed the people not only to their own sin but also to the fact that their current situation was only a shadow of the relentless judgment of God.

But even here, in the dark days of plague and famine, there was the hope of restoration. God reminded His people, both then and now, that the Day of the Lord is both a day of judgment for His enemies and a day of vindication and redemption for those who have repented and trusted in Him.

## Session Summary

The prophet Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day in which God would judge His enemies, vindicate His people, and restore the world. In light of the coming judgment, Joel called the people of Judah to repentance. As believers who are restored by God's Spirit, we are commissioned to call others to repentance, to spread the good news that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

## 1. God calls His people to grieve over their sin (Joel 1:1-14).

We don't know much about the prophet Joel, but we know that his message from the Lord was a sober reminder about the grievous nature of sin. In the days of Joel, an unprecedented disaster had overtaken the land of Judah, and Joel wanted to make sure that no one attributed it to mere bad luck or happenstance. This was judgment from God:

*<sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:*

*<sup>2</sup> Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land!*

*Has such a thing happened in your days,  
or in the days of your fathers?*

*<sup>3</sup> Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children,  
and their children to another generation.*

*<sup>4</sup> What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.  
What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten,  
and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.*

Joel's words indicate that God is not passive in His rule over creation. Rather, He is actively involved in the most intimate details of life.

Jesus would later express the positive side of this truth when He commanded His followers not to worry: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matt. 6:25-26). For the believer, the reason we can be free from anxiety is because we know God is intimately involved in all the details of life.

The scary side of God's involvement in life is that sometimes terrible things do happen as a result of His judgment. The people in the days of Joel couldn't chalk up their situation to happenstance. The God who feeds the birds is, in this case, the same God who oversaw the swarm of locusts. In light of God's involvement, then, Joel called the people to recognize the truth of what they were experiencing, and the proper response was to grieve over their sin that had brought the judgment of God:

## Further Commentary

"Joel prophesied during the time of the kings of Judah, perhaps sometime between 835-789 B.C. The name Joel means 'Yahweh is God.' Joel's prophecy demonstrates the truth of God's name. Other than the fact that his father's name was Pethuel, little else is known about the prophet Joel. His prophecy was directed to the people of Judah and was written in elegant but powerful poetry. In three short chapters Joel lays out basic themes found elsewhere in the books of prophecy: sin and evil inevitably lead to God's judgment while repentance reaps forgiveness; forgiveness and faithfulness will be followed by blessings."<sup>2</sup>

—*The Mission of God Study Bible*

## Voices from Church History

“Solemnized by the knowledge of the deep need, and inspired by the vision of all things made new by the mighty Christ, resolve to give yourselves to the promotion of a spiritual awakening.”<sup>3</sup>

—John Mott (1865–1955)

<sup>5</sup> *Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.*

<sup>6</sup> *For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions’ teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness.*

<sup>7</sup> *It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white.*

<sup>8</sup> *Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.*

<sup>9</sup> *The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD.*

*The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD.*

<sup>10</sup> *The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes.*

<sup>11</sup> *Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished.*

<sup>12</sup> *The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes.*

*Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.*

<sup>13</sup> *Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar.*

*Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.*

<sup>14</sup> *Consecrate a fast; call 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.*

Joel gave his people a strong dose of reality. The locust swarm was meant as a wake-up call for the people to recognize their sin and return to the Lord. The beginning of that return involves proper grief over sin.



What does it mean to grieve over sin?



What is the difference between grieving over the effects of sin and grieving over sin itself?

No doubt the people could see the effects of their sin. Their land had been devastated; their fields had been destroyed; all the sources of their livelihood and earthly joy had been taken from them.



Like the people of Joel's day, our sin has practical and grievous consequences. Though we might be tempted to see these things as merely the outworking of our mistakes, it's much bigger than that. The consequences are evidence of the discipline of God upon us, and until we recognize the work of God inside these uncomfortable and sometimes disastrous situations, we won't recognize and properly grieve over the sin in our lives.

In the end, though, there is a difference between grieving over the effects of our sin and over our sin itself. The former is meant to move us to the latter, where our greatest grief over our sin is not because of what it's done to our lives but because of what it's done to the heart and glory of God.

God is our Father, and when we sin, we show our lack of trust in His wisdom and ways. Our sin, then, is a personal affront to God, and we should grieve over the statement it makes both to Him and about Him in the world where we are His ambassadors. Grief over sin, though, is more than an emotional response. It calls for action, just as it did in Joel's day.

-  Take a closer look at the latter part of the passage above. What are some of the actions that were to accompany the emotional aspect of grief from the people?

## 2. God calls His people to return to Him in repentance (Joel 2:12-14).

When we see the word *repent*, we immediately think of the crazy street preacher with the scraggly beard who bellows it out over and over at the top of his lungs: "Repent! The end is near!" This mental picture reveals our misunderstanding of what it means to repent.

We often think "repent" means "stop." Whatever that thing is you're doing, grit your teeth and quit doing it—whether it's idol worship, illicit sexual behavior, coarse joking, or gluttony. But this interpretation of repentance misses the love that comes with the biblical picture. To repent is to *turn*, not to stop.

Turning is different than stopping. It's bigger than stopping. You can stop and still be facing the same direction, sitting motionless. And though stopping sinful behavior is important, it's really only the midway point in the fullness of true repentance. Repenting isn't just about stopping because it's not enough to stop. Repentance is about turning, and when you don't just stop but turn, you are choosing something better than the action you were doing. To put it another way, repentance isn't just walking away from something; it's walking toward something.

### Voices from Church History

"Our sorrow and grief for sin must not spring merely from a fear of wrath; for if we have no other ground than that, it proceeds from self-love and not from any love to God."<sup>4</sup>

—George Whitefield  
(1714-1770)

### Further Commentary

"Repentance is godly sorrow for one's sin together with a resolution to turn from it. There are other forms of regret over one's wrongdoing that are based on different motivations. If we have sinned and the consequences are unpleasant, we may well regret what we have done. But that is not true repentance. That is mere penitence. Real repentance is sorrow for one's sin because of the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted upon him. This sorrow is accompanied by a genuine desire to abandon that sin. There is regret over the sin irrespective of sin's personal consequence."<sup>5</sup>

—Millard Erickson

## Further Commentary

“Once again, in light of the coming of the day of the Lord, the call is to repent. Joel says ‘return’ to the Lord (vv. 12-13). The Hebrew word means ‘turn’...You can tell that you have truly repented if you are determined to turn your back on sin and walk with the Lord in loving obedience, through the power he provides. Our motive for heartfelt ‘returning’ to the Lord is his own character: ‘gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love’ (v. 13; quoting Ex. 34:6). The apostle Paul will later echo these truths, saying, ‘God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance’ (Rom. 2:4).”<sup>6</sup>

—Timothy Witmer,  
*Gospel Transformation Bible*

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 68. Repentance

Repentance is a response to God’s gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one’s sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one’s sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God’s work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

In the days of Joel, God called His people not only to stop their sin but to turn to the only true source of joy and satisfaction:

<sup>12</sup> *“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,  
“return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments.”*  
*Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;  
and he relents over disaster.*  
<sup>14</sup> *Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?*

Joel was not alone in his call here. Throughout the pages of Scripture, we see the call to repent and return to the pursuing God over and over again. The prophets demanded it during seasons of national sin in the Old Testament (Isa. 1:4,16-31; Amos 4:6-11). It was the core message of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2). It was the picture of the prodigal in Jesus’ famous story of a wayward son who returned home (Luke 15:11-32). And it was the response Peter gave on the Day of Pentecost when the people asked him what they should do about the fact that Jesus was crucified and then raised from the dead (Acts 2:37-40).

In this passage in Joel, we see two key aspects of what it means to truly turn away from sin and turn toward God:

### **Repentance is an act of the heart expressed in action.**

You can see the clear emphasis on the heart in these verses. Joel reminded the people to turn to God with all their hearts and to make sure that their hearts were torn, not just their clothes.

The physical signs of repentance can be manufactured. We can make a simple choice of the will to appear grieved with our sin. We can weep, we can fast, and we can even do something like tear our clothes—one of the biblical signs of mourning and sorrow. Apart from the heart, though, this isn’t repentance; it’s hypocrisy.

At the same time, true repentance with the whole heart always results in action (Jas. 2:20-26; cf. Gal. 5:6). That’s because what truly happens in the heart always works itself out in practical ways. In this case, then, repentance in the heart results in demonstrated action.

For us, the act of repentance might not mean tearing our clothes or going without food, but it will mean *something*. It will mean turning from old habits and attitudes; it will mean actively seeking the forgiveness of those we have wronged; it will mean a changed lifestyle that falls in line with what’s happened deeply in our hearts.

- ❓ Why is it tempting to *tear our clothes* but not *tear our hearts*?
- ❓ Why must both action and attitude go together?

**Repentance is received by a gracious and compassionate God.**

There is always an element of risk when we go to someone we have wronged in a humble manner, admitting our fault. Why? Because we don't know how they'll respond. They might receive us warmly, but they also might snicker at our actions. They might want reconciliation, or they might hold a grudge. The amazing news in this passage is that there is no such risk when we return to God.

When we come to God in repentance, we don't have to wonder about His response. He will not hold back His forgiveness and His love; He's not interested in putting us on "spiritual probation" until we prove ourselves worthy of His mercy. Rather, it's His character to readily and freely extend that mercy and grace to all who come to Him.

God is pursuing people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, ready to receive them as they come to see His gracious character most fully expressed in the message of the gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a once-and-for-all declaration of the grace and mercy of God. Demonstrated in His sacrifice of His own Son, God invites all who are willing to repent to turn to Him and find Him waiting with open arms.

- ❓ How does knowing the character of God change the manner in which we repent?

**3. God promises to restore His people by His Spirit (Joel 2:18,25-32).**

Following God's call to repentance in Joel, the prophet's message turns a corner. Starting in Joel 2:18, the text begins to look forward to the promised restoration of God's people:

*<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.*

Though the text doesn't tell us exactly what happened, the change in the mood of the rest of the Book of Joel is so dramatic that some scholars believe that the people got the message. The people repented, and they began to see the compassion of the Lord played out in their land. As chapter 2 continues, though, we see that not only was there an immediate fulfillment to God's promise of restoration, but the text also points forward to an even greater and more lasting restoration by the Spirit of God:

**Voices from the Church**

"God yearns for the wholehearted love of His bride because He knows that this is the only place she will be fully free, fully alive, fully and intensely whole."<sup>7</sup>

—Timothy Stoner

**Voices from Church History**

"Every renunciation of sin, every putting off of the old man, is in essence the repetition of the first act of repentance...The definite and positive renunciation of sin in every form should become the fixed habit of the soul."<sup>8</sup>

—E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928)

## Further Commentary

“The OT prophets looked forward to the day when Yahweh would enable His people to keep the covenant and His laws by giving them a new heart and mind (Isa. 32:15-20; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26-30). The giving of His ‘Spirit’ would take place at the time of the forgiveness of their sins. Peter on the day of Pentecost announced the gift of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins by calling on God’s name (Acts 2:21,38-40). If the people accepted Jesus as Messiah and Savior, they would receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. Yahweh’s promise of the Spirit in Joel was not reserved for a few but for anyone who would believe from ‘all humanity.’ Peter saw that this gift was not limited to Israel, but was for ‘all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call’ (Acts 2:39). This prophecy from Joel was partly fulfilled in the days of Pentecost as well as in the ‘Gentile Pentecost’ (Acts 10), and the fulfillment has continued throughout the church age (Rom. 10:13). The final fulfillment will take place at the conversion of the Jewish people (Rom. 11:26-27). Moses was glad when Joshua told him that others gave evidence of having God’s Spirit by prophesying. Said Moses, ‘If only all the Lord’s people were prophets, and the Lord would place His Spirit on them’ (Num. 11:29). The cosmic signs that are part of the Day of the Lord inspire awe for believers and terror for unbelievers. This day is one of salvation as well as judgment (Rev. 6:12-17).”<sup>9</sup>

—Shawn C. Madden,  
*HCSB Study Bible*

*<sup>25</sup> I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.*

*<sup>26</sup> “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.*

*And my people shall never again be put to shame.*

*<sup>27</sup> You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.*

*And my people shall never again be put to shame.*

*<sup>28</sup> “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.*

*<sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

*<sup>30</sup> “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*

*<sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.*

The Holy Spirit was certainly active in the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:2, we see the Spirit hovering over the surface of the waters, and He shows up now and then in the rest of the Old Testament. There He is with Bezalel, filling and enabling him to work with his hands to construct the sanctuary of God (Ex. 35:31). And there He is descending upon Saul so that he began to prophesy (1 Sam. 19:23). There He is periodically throughout the Book of Judges, giving the leaders the strength to defeat enemies with things like jawbones (Judg. 15:14-20). But starting in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit showed up like never before.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit didn’t come upon an individual but the entire believing community. In the Old Testament, there was particular respect given to older men, yet the Spirit’s presence would not be reserved for the “respectable” but would instead be given liberally to “all flesh.” From the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, the Lord would be present with them all in the person of the Holy Spirit. In that day, as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit wouldn’t be a divine visitor but a permanent resident, dwelling forever inside those who believe in Jesus.



What does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in this fashion show you about the character of God?

If you are a Christian, then the Holy Spirit lives inside you. You are the evidence of the day Joel looked forward to. This indwelling in you—no matter your age, gender, race, or socioeconomic condition—reminds us all of God’s generosity and His desire to live in intimate relationship with His people.

But look closely at the passage. You’ll see that this promise of the Spirit—no matter how revolutionary it might have sounded to its first hearers and no matter how amazing it seems to us living in its fulfillment—is placed in the context of “the great and awesome day of the LORD.” In addition to this outpouring of the Spirit, that Day of the Lord that Joel described will be full of terror and judgment.

Though we are living in the time of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, we are awaiting the final Day of the Lord, when God will at long last execute final judgment on His enemies. But even in this moment, there is an escape provided. That escape is the cross.

-  Why do you think many Christians find it challenging to talk about the judgment of God?
-  What are some practical but appropriate ways you can present the reality of God’s judgment with those around you?

## Conclusion

As we look forward to the Day of the Lord in our time, we must remind ourselves that God’s patience with the sin of humanity will not last forever. The day is coming when we will be held accountable for what we have done with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So will those around us.

Though it might not be popular to talk about God’s judgment in our day and time, it is an inescapable reality. We cannot be the kind of Christians who love to talk about God’s love and yet harbor some embarrassment when it comes to discussing the reality of His coming judgment of sin. Let us not be the people who drink deeply of the gift of the Holy Spirit in our day and yet stingily withhold the message of escape from those around us. The way of escape during the Day of the Lord is available, and that is why we are active in sharing that message with those around us.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Joel warned God’s people about the Day of the Lord—a day in which God would judge His enemies, vindicate His people, and restore the world. The only way for us to escape God’s wrath on that day is to be found in Christ, who was judged in our place and in whose vindication we share.

### Voices from the Church

“We are invited to rejoice in a God who is still pouring out his Spirit on those who, in glad and humble response to his call, turn to him to be saved.”<sup>10</sup>

—David Prior

### Voices from the Church

“To repentant sinners the Lord declares, ‘Fear not...be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things’ (Joel 2:21). You need not be ashamed of your wasted years. God is going to remove from you the evil army, and you will eat and be satisfied. You will never again be ashamed! (Joel 2:19-20,26-27).”<sup>11</sup>

—David Wilkerson



## Additional Resources

# God Pursues Judah

### References

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2. "Joel," in *The Mission of God Study Bible*, eds. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 916.
3. John R. Mott, *The World's Student Christian Federation* (1898), 47.
4. George Whitefield, in *Whitefield Gold*, comp. Ray Comfort (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2006), 91.
5. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 868.
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7. Timothy J. Stoner, *The God Who Smokes* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2008), 134.
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### Study Material

- "Joel: Day of the Lord"—Chapter 26 from *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* by Michael Williams
- "What Is Repentance?"—Article by Josh Etter; find a link to this article at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "The Day of the Lord," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

### Sermon Podcast

Trevin Wax: "Refreshed in Repentance"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

### Tip of the Week

#### Celebrate Your "Missionaries"

No groups ministry can enjoy sustained growth without dedicated preschool, children, and student workers. Nearly all these leaders come out of adult groups, and they need to stay connected. The real measurement of an adult group's strength is not just the number in attendance but also the number of those serving outside the group. Take some time to remind group members of the opportunities they may have to represent the group by leading in other areas of the church. Lead your group to find ways of encouraging those who are already missionaries in other areas, and celebrate the "missionaries" they have produced.