

Week 21

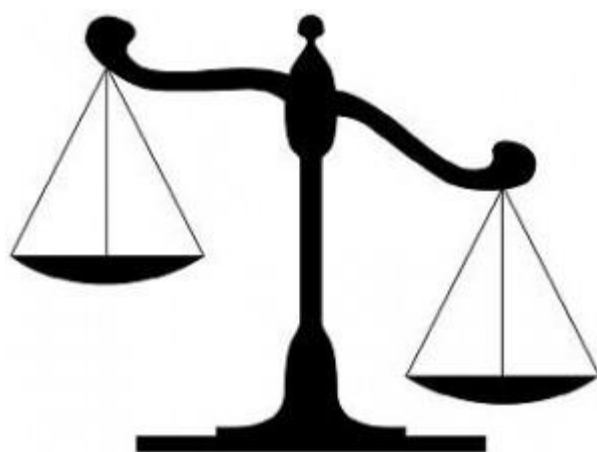
Joel 2 Lifestyle



*Understanding and Seeing
Judgment from God's
perspective*

Rev 19:2

*For true and
righteous are His
judgments, because
He has judged the
great harlot who
corrupted the earth
with her fornication;
and He has avenged
on her the blood of
His servants shed by
her.*



When we hear the word “judgment”, what is the first thing that comes to our mind?

We often associate it with negative things like punishment and pain. Our natural response is to shrink back.

Deep in our hearts we are unable to reconcile how a loving, kind, compassionate and merciful God could possibly judge His people. We simply cannot understand why God’s judgments can be so severe.

*But what is judgment,
and why
does God have
to judge?*

Judgment is about the justice of a loving God



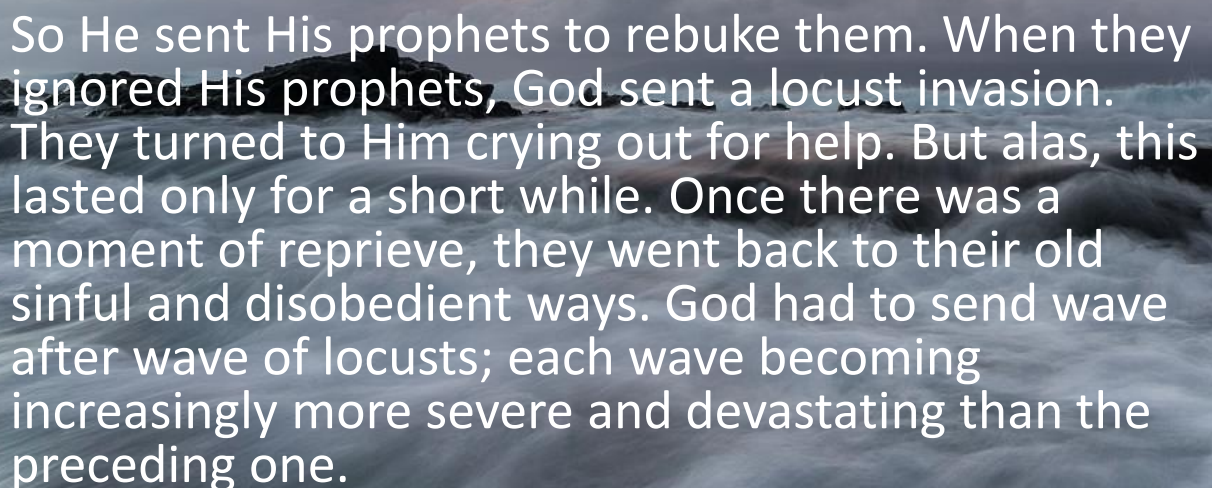
It is about the righteous God exercising His justice. It is the restoration work of God, taking what is not right and making it right. For example, God's judgment on sickness is to bring healing. God's judgment on bondage is to bring deliverance. God's judgment on a world of darkness is to bring His light and salvation.

God is righteous and in His righteousness He cannot tolerate sin and evil. He knows that sin and wickedness will destroy us. So out of His love, He sends people to warn us when we sin. If we do not listen and keep on sinning, He will discipline us. He does this because like a loving father, He cares and loves us enough to want us to be on the path of righteousness. When we realize our condition, repent and turn to Him, He is quick to embrace us in His arms of love.



So too with people and nations! When men turn away from God, He will send His prophets to warn them. If they do not take heed, He will then send shakings to get their attention. If these still do not cause the hearts of men to turn, He will send even more shakings. Only when sin has reached its fullness does He release His judgments. Even then, He releases them in the hope that those who have sinned and compromised will return to Him, and that many who do not know Him will turn to Him.

In the days of Joel, many had turned away from God. Many had turned to idolatry and evil. But God wanted them to return to Him.

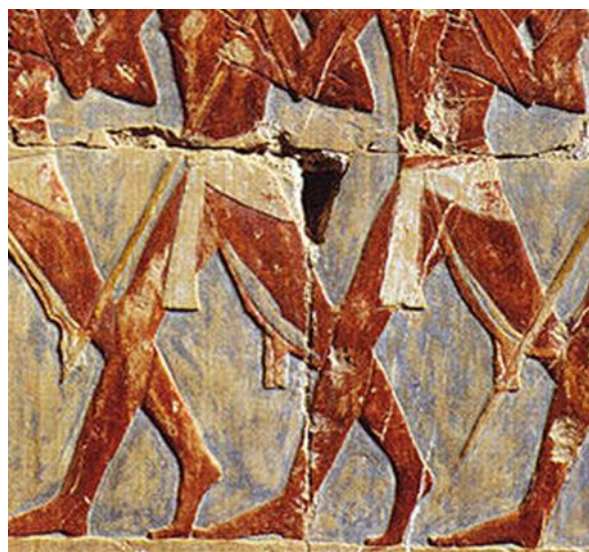


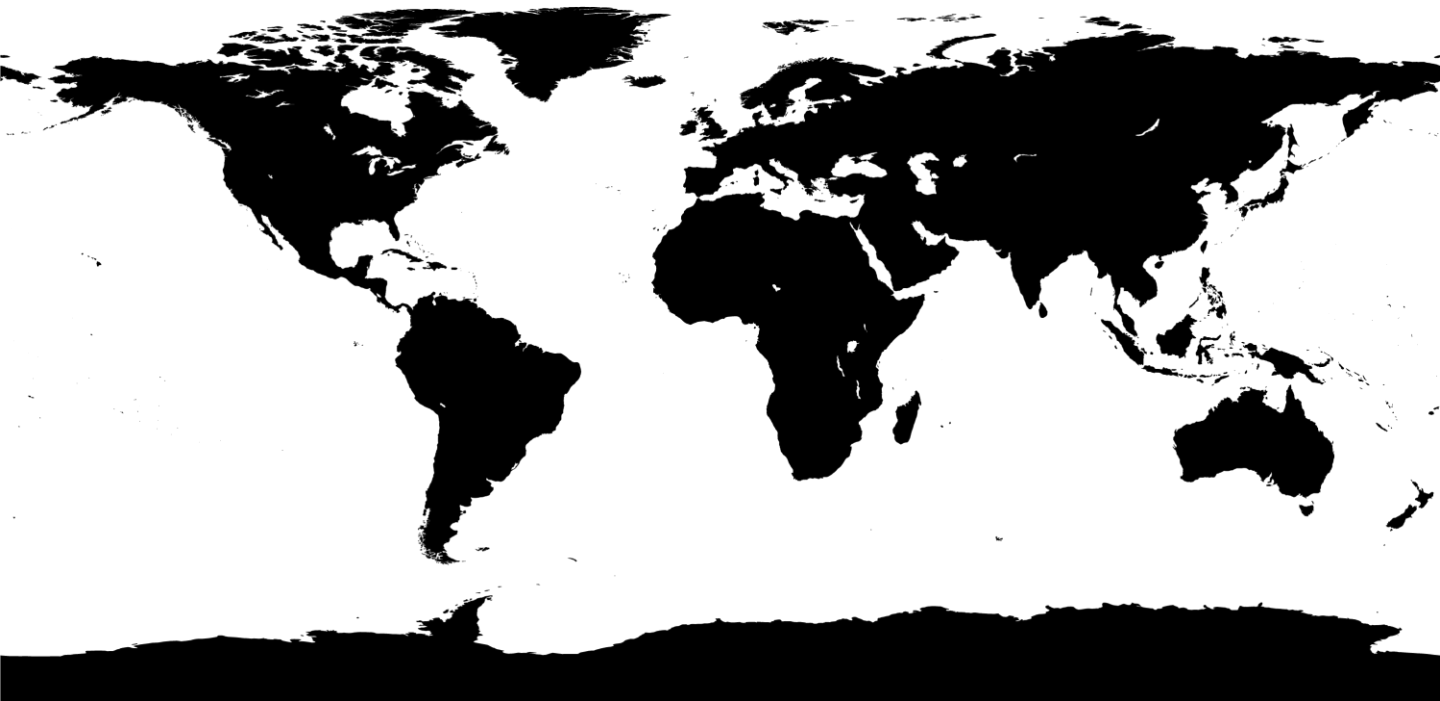
So He sent His prophets to rebuke them. When they ignored His prophets, God sent a locust invasion. They turned to Him crying out for help. But alas, this lasted only for a short while. Once there was a moment of reprieve, they went back to their old sinful and disobedient ways. God had to send wave after wave of locusts; each wave becoming increasingly more severe and devastating than the preceding one.



Joel then warned of a terrible invasion by a foreign army. Despite all these, the people refused to take heed. Finally in 586 BC, Jerusalem was ravaged and captured by King Nebuchadnezzar.

You see, God in His mercy sends us warnings through voices He raises up! He tries to get the attention of man through shakings. It is only when people do not take heed and when sin reaches its fullness, that God releases His judgments. Even then, God always uses the least amount of shakings, or the least severe judgments, to bring in the greatest number of souls into His Kingdom and the repentance of hearts!





Through the Old Testament, we see that God often raises up evil men and nations to discipline His people and judge the wicked.

He uses them as His tools of discipline for the redeemed and also as His tools of judgment for the unredeemed.

God uses these measures as instruments to remove all things that hinder wholehearted love in the hearts of the redeemed and to awaken the unredeemed to see the true and living God.

JUDGEMENT



More than just serving the justice of God, judgment is also about the grace and mercy of God. It is about a loving God purifying His Church so that she will grow in wholehearted love for Him. It is about a loving God yearning for wicked men to turn back to Him, and for the lost to come to the knowledge of His amazing grace and unfailing love!

May we come to a point in time when we can say from the depths of our hearts, “True and righteous are all your judgments Lord, we agree with them fully!”



Readings and Prayers for the week

Readings for Week 21

Take some time to read the book of Joel. What were the waves of shakings that God had sent? Did the people respond? Why not? How would we have responded if we were in their shoes?

There are many events and happenings occurring in the world and around us. Do we have eyes to see what is happening? Are there similarities to what happened during the days of Joel? What do you think God is saying to the Church? How should we respond?

Prayers for Week 21

Pray Ephesians 1:17 and ask God to reveal Jesus who is coming back as a righteous Judge. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring understanding of God's standards of righteousness. Ask Him to highlight any areas in our lives that are not in line with His ways. Pray for grace to love what He loves and to hate what He hates.