



KEEP MOVING

Possibly the greatest run in NFL history happened on January 8, 2011. In an NFC Wild Card game, Marshawn Lynch of the Seattle Seahawks rushed 67 yards, broke nine tackles, and scored a touchdown that secured the Seahawks' victory. Scan the QR code to watch the play.



Last Week, Joel reminded the reader of a recent locust invasion that ravaged the land. The prophet used that disaster to foreshadow a coming invasion. Like the locusts, the Babylonians would arrive as an innumerable horde, covering the horizon and destroying everything in their path.

In our passage this Week, we'll see the way forward. Israel will be hit—hard. Yet, there is hope. The way forward isn't over, under, or around. Like Lynch plowing through defenders, the only way forward is through. Israel must heed the warning. They must prepare, press on, and look to their only hope for that great and terrible Day. We shall see that God is calling us to respond in the very same way!

JOEL 2:12–16, 28–32

¹² “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

²⁸ “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. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

³⁰ “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD COMES. ³² 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In every Week of this study, we've discussed the gospel. The gospel literally means, "good news." The gospel message is simple enough a child can fully come into a relationship with God through Jesus. And yet, it is so far beyond our comprehension that we can spend a lifetime studying and never find all the answers. Scan the QR code for the gospel in four minutes. G.O.S.P.E.L. God Our Sins Paying Everyone Life.



DISCUSSION

What is the greatest fight scene you've ever seen in a movie or TV show?

1. What did God desire & require? (12-13a)

2. What did Joel say about God's character? (13b-c)

3. What did God promise to do? (28b-29)

4. What salvation truth is described? (32a)

5. How does God describe repentance in our passage and why might he describe it that way?

6. Practically, what should repentance look like in your life? (How do you repent and how often?)

None of us are perfect. Although we're free from sin, we still struggle. Repentance is part of the normal Christian life. If you have questions, talk to your coach.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY NOTES

WARNING SHOT PART 2

Last Week, Joel issued the warning shot that Babylon was coming as a tool of divine judgment in God's strong hand. We ended the study notes asking, "What response to the warning shot do you think the Lord might have hoped for based on the Joel's warning?" If you were with us in Week 2 when we studied *Jonah*, you probably know the answer—**"return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."** In a word: repentance!

God isn't after ritual or ceremony, he wants deep, heartfelt, sorrowful surrender. That's what it means to, **"Rend your heart and not your garments."** In other words, externals won't save you. Often in the biblical story, people would rip their clothing Hulk-Hogan-style to show grief—the word "*rend*" means, "*to tear*." They wore sack cloth and sat in ashes and/or put ashes on their head (see *Jonah* 3:5–7). But, **"the Lord sees not as a man sees: man looks at outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart"** (1 Samuel 16:7).

We've already seen the Lord respond with mercy in the book of *Jonah*. In fact, the very attributes that got *Jonah* so hot are now the ones Joel urged the Israelites to throw themselves upon as they plead for God's mercy. This can't be an external show, it must be an internal surrender—a rending of the heart.

THE FEARFUL SHOULD REPENT

Repentance means "turn around" or "turn away," but it must first begin with agreeing with God that my sin is wrong. God said, **"Return to the LORD your God."** You can only do this by turning from your sin. But when you do, **he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.** The prophet then asked, **"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 emphasized the need for repentance by calling everyone to join, **"Blow the trumpet in Zion...call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants."**

It's so urgent and important that he even said, **"Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber."** If you aren't familiar with ancient Israelite weddings, it's sufficient to note that a wedding celebration was a big deal and included

a great deal of private time for a bride and groom both in preparation before the ceremony and consummation after. Joel essentially said that no person can miss the call to repentance no matter what—literally nothing should stand in the way of everyone coming together in repentance!

In fact, it's this call for national repentance that Moses gave in Deuteronomy 30 after Israel experienced the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28. Although Babylon wasn't mentioned in chapter 28, the coming horde Joel prophesied was a direct fulfillment for Israel's disobedience. Chapter 30 begins, not *if*, but **"when all these things come upon you... and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God (i.e. "repent"), you and your children... then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you."**

HOPE LIVES FOR THE FEARFUL

Although aspects of Deuteronomy 28 and 30 were fulfilled with the Babylonian Exile, some aspects were not. In the same way, Joel continued prophesying with some things that have **come to pass**, not with the Babylonians, but centuries after he lived. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers. Peter interpreted this even using Joel's prophecy saying, **"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."**

Peter's lengthy quote from *Joel* ended with, **"everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."** The Apostle Paul quoted this same phrase in Romans 10 after sharing the how people should respond to the gospel; **"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."**

That's precisely what it means to **"call on the name of the Lord"** for every person living today. It means that if we surrender our hearts to the risen Lord, we will be saved. Luke 6:45 says, **"out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."** In other words, when my heart is so consumed by the weight of my sin and the fact that sin's consequences are far worse than locusts or Babylonians, then I can't help but cry out to my one and only Savior, Christ Jesus.

It is to Christ that we "rend out hearts." This isn't a one-time transaction. We must continually live a life of repentance. Thankfully, 1 John 1:9 tells us exactly what this looks like, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** This is the response we *should* have to the hope we have in Jesus. But like we asked last Week, what response will *you* have?