



Session 17 ■ Special Interest Topic 1 Joel and the Three Angels' Messages

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe" (Revelation 14:17, 18).

If you want to understand Revelation, you need to know something about the book of Joel.

We find a major structural parallel between the end-time scene of Revelation 13 and 14 and Joel 2:28 to 3:21.

1. Joel depicts the Spirit being poured out.
2. He notes the appearance of heavenly signs.
3. The nations of the world who gather outside Jerusalem attack "the remnant."
4. God pronounces judgment from Mount Zion and "threshes" those opposed to His people.

The story in Joel 3 is about a double worldwide gathering. The remnant assembles on Mount Zion (*Jerusalem in Joel 2:32, 3:1*) while the wicked gather in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, just outside Jerusalem, where they meet their fate (*Joel 3:2, 9-17*).

The content of Revelation matches the storyline of Joel:

1. God pours the Spirit out (Revelation 5:6).
2. Heavenly signs occur (Revelation 6:12-17).
3. The nations of the world attack the remnant on Mount Zion (Revelation 13:8-10; 13:12-18; 14:1-3).
4. The nations are trampled and destroyed outside Jerusalem. (Revelation 14:20)

So Revelation 13 and 14 seem to build on Joel 2 and 3.

Both passages picture the final battle of earth's history. Jerusalem stands on a hilltop and is surrounded by valleys on three sides. God's people are huddled together inside the fortress, encircled on all sides by enemy forces.

This local picture becomes worldwide and spiritual in Revelation—note the word "earth" six times in this part of Revelation 14. Israel huddled in the fortress of Jerusalem becomes the worldwide church in hiding during the final crisis. John spiritualises the double gathering of Joel into those who follow the three angels' messages and those who do not.

The images of warfare in Revelation are a spiritual matter for the Christian (*see 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Revelation 16:15*). The weapons of the Christian's warfare are not the type that tears you to pieces, such as AK-47 rifles, M1A1 tanks and F-16 warplanes.

The Christian warfare is a battle with one's own thought processes, ideas, and attitudes. It is a struggle for your mind and what you believe. Sin is so attractive and deceptive that God has laid out its consequences graphically in this text to get us to take the battle seriously.