

# The Book of Joel

## Introduction

Joel means "Jehovah is God." This name occurs frequently in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 8:2; 1 Chronicles 4:35, 5:4, 8, 12, etc.). The prophet Joel was the son of Pethuel. Numerous guesses have been made about his personality. A tradition states that he was from Bethom in the tribe of Reuben. In 1 Chronicles 24:16 a man by name of Pethahiah is mentioned. Some have connected him with the father of Joel, Pethuel, claiming upon this that Joel belonged to a priestly family; but this, as well as other claims cannot be confirmed. Jewish expositors make the statement that Pethuel was Samuel, because Samuel had a son by name of Joel; but, inasmuch as the sons of Samuel were evildoers this is incorrect. The book itself does not give even a single hint as to his personal history.

## When and Where Joel Lived

As to the time and place, when and where he exercised his prophetic office, we are not left in doubt. He prophesied not like Hosea among the ten tribes, but he was a prophet of Judah. The entire prophecy bears witness to it; this fact has never been disputed. It is different with the date of Joel. Destructive criticism has assigned to Joel a post-exilic date, with some very puerile arguments. For instance the claim that the mention of the walls of Jerusalem (chapter 2:7, 9), point to a date after Ezra and Nehemiah. Such an argument is not an argument of a scholar but of school-boy. Critics also object to an early date because the Greeks are mentioned in chapter 3:6. But the Greeks are also mentioned in an inscription of Sargon (about 710 B.C.), and long before that in the Armana letters a Greek is also mentioned, as stated in "Higher Criticism and the Monuments" by Professor Sayce.

The best Jewish and Christian scholarship has maintained a very early date of Joel. When the editor published his larger work on Joel, in which he puts the date between 860 and 850 B.C., Professor H.A. Sayce of Oxford, one of the greatest scholars of our times, wrote in a personal letter to the writer: "Let me thank you heartily for your very interesting exposition of Joel. I am glad to see a work of the kind on conservative lines; the attempts to find a late date for the prophet rests on arguments which to the inductive scientist are no arguments at all." This strong statement and endorsement of a very early date for Joel certainly outweighs the arguments of certain critics who possess nothing like the scholarship of the Oxford professor.

There is nothing mentioned in Joel of the Assyrian period 800-650, nor is there anything said of the Babylonian period 650-538, hence Joel must have prophesied before the Assyrian period, that is in the ninth century B.C., or he must have lived after the exile. The latter is excluded, therefore Joel exercised his office as prophet in Judah during the middle of the ninth century, as stated above, about 860-850 B.C. This view is abundantly verified by different facts found in the book itself.

Now, the date of Amos is generally accepted as being in the middle of the 8th century before Christ. In the first chapter of the book of Amos there is an undoubted quotation from the book of Joel. (See Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2). Dr. Pusey makes the following argument out of this fact:

"Amos quoting Joel attests two things. (1) That Joel's prophecy must, at the time when Amos wrote, have become a part of Holy Scriptures, and its authority must have been acknowledged; (2) That its authority must have been acknowledged by, and it must have been in circulation among, those to whom Amos prophesied; other-wise he would not have prefixed to his book those words of Joel. For the whole force of the words, as employed by Amos, depends on being recognized by his hearers, as a renewal of the prophecy of Joel. Certainly bad men jeered at Amos, as though this threatening would not be fulfilled."

The seven strongest reasons for the early date of Joel are the following:

1. Joel charges the Philistines with having invaded Judah, captured the inhabitants, and sold them as slaves. Now, according to 2 Chron. 21:16, this happened under Joram, B.C. 889-883. And they suffered the punishment predicted for their crime, under Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:6. Hence Joel could not have written this book before B.C. 889, nor later than 732.

2. The Phoenicians, i.e., those of Tyre and Sidon, who in the days of David and Solomon were the allies, had in later times become the enemies of Judah. They too had been guilty of selling Jewish prisoners to the Grecians. Joel predicts that they also shall be punished for this crime--a prediction fulfilled in the time of Uzziah, B.C. 811-759. This proves that Joel must have prophesied before the days of Uzziah.

3. The Edomites (3:19), are ranked among the enemies of Judah. They came from the same stock as the Jews, and on account of their sin against their brethren, their country was to become a perpetual desolation. From 2 Kings 8:20, comp. with 2 Chron. 21:8, we learn that they became independent of Judah in the time of Joram, B.C. 889-883. They were again subdued, and their capital city Petra captured, B.C. 838-811, though the southern and eastern parts of their territory were not conquered until the reign of Uzziah, about B.C. 830. The prophet must have exercised his ministry, therefore, prior to the latter date.

4. The fact that no mention is made of the invasion by the Syrians of Damascus proves that Joel was one of the early prophets. This occurred in the latter part of the reign of Josiah, B.C. 850-840.

5. The high antiquity of Joel is proved by the fact that he makes no reference to the Assyrian invasion of the two Jewish kingdoms in B.C. 790. On the other hand, Amos clearly alludes to it (6:14).

6. Another proof is derived from the relation between Joel and Amos. The latter was certainly well acquainted with the writings of the former.

7. The mention of the Valley of Jehoshaphat is a circumstance leading to the same conclusion. It took this name from the memorable victory there gained over Moab and Ammon. The way in which Joel refers to it shows that this event must have been a comparatively recent one, and that the memory of it was still fresh.

On these grounds we conclude that in fixing the time of this prophet, we cannot take for our terminus a quo an earlier date than B.C. 890, nor for our terminus ad quem a later one than 840. It most probably falls between B.C. 860-850. Joel therefore is probably the oldest of the Minor Prophets.

### **The Prophecy of Joel**

The prophecy of Joel is one which extends from his own time to the time of Israel's restoration and blessing in the day of the Lord. The style of the brief prophecy is sublime. To show its beauty we give a corrected metric version. It must be read through several times to grasp its vivid descriptions, the terse and solemn utterances, the full, smooth phrases, and above all the revelation it contains. His utterances are distinguished by the soaring flight of imagination, the originality, beauty and variety of the similes. The conceptions are simple enough, but they are at the same time bold and grand. The perfect order in which they are arranged, the even flow, the well compacted structure of the prophecy are all remarkable.

He may well be called "The Prophet of the Lord's Day." Five times he mentions this day. Chapters 1:15, 2:1-2, 10-11, 30-31, and 3:14-16. The great theme then is "The Day of the Lord," that coming day, when the Lord is manifested, when the enemies of Israel are judged, when the Lord restores and redeems Israel.

The occasion of the book and prophecy of Joel was a dreadful scourge which swept over the

land of Israel. Locusts swarms had fallen upon the land and stripped it of everything green. There was also a great drought. All was a chastisement from the Lord. Hence we see in the first chapter the penitential lamentations of old and young, priests and people. Then the vision widens in the second chapter. The locusts appear no longer as a scourge of literal insects; they become typical of an invading army. This hostile army invades the land from the North and makes the land a wilderness. The alarm is sounded in Zion; the repentance of the people follows. Then comes the great change in this picture of desolation and despair. The day of the Lord is announced. He acts in behalf of His people. He delivers them from the northern Army; He restores what the locusts had devoured; the land is restored and the latter rain is given. At the close of the second chapter stands the prophecy which predicts spiritual blessings through the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, a prophecy which has not yet been completely fulfilled, which is not now in process of fulfillment, but which will be accomplished in the day of the Lord. The last chapter is the great finale of this symphony of prophecy. Here the judgment of the nations is vividly portrayed; what the day of the Lord will bring, and what will follow in blessing is the final theme.

But few Christians have ever given much heed to this prophetic book. There are many important truths in this book. A great deal of confusion might have been avoided if more attention had been given to the setting in which the prediction of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh is found. The Pentecostal delusion is built up mostly upon the wrong interpretations of this prophecy.

### **The Division of Joel**

The divisions of the prophecy of Joel, as found in our English version, cannot be improved upon. We follow it in our analysis and annotations.

## **THE BOOK OF JOEL**

### **A Metric Version**

#### **CHAPTER 1**

1. The Word of Jehovah which came to Joel, the Son of Pethuel.

2. Hear this, ye aged men

And open the ear ye inhabitants of the land!

Hath this happened in your days,

Or even in the days of your fathers?

3. Relate it to your children

And your children to their children,

And their children to another generation.

4. What the Gazam\*1 left, the Arbeh hath devoured

And what the Arbeh left, the Jelek hath devoured

And what the Jelek left, the Chasel hath devoured

5. Awake, ye drunkards and weep!

And howl all ye drinkers of wine

Because of the sweet wine,

For it is taken away from your mouth.

6. For a nation has come up upon my land

Mighty and without number-- His teeth--lion's teeth--

The jaw teeth, that of a lioness.

7. He hath made my vine for a desolation

And my fig tree broken off;

Peeled off completely and cast it away;

Its branches are made white.

8. Lament like a virgin!

Girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

9. Cut off is the meat and drink offering from the house of Jehovah.

10. "Wasted is the field

Mourning is the land--For wasted is the corn

The new wine is dried up      The oil faileth."

11. Be ashamed, husbandman!

Howl--vine dressers!

For the wheat and the barley.

Because the harvest of the field is lost.

12. The vine is dried up

And the fig tree faileth

The pomegranate, also the palm and the apple tree.

All the trees of the field are withered.

Gone is joy from the children of men.

13. Gird yourselves and lament, O ye priests,

Howl, ministers of the altar;

Come lie down in sackcloth all night

Ye ministers of my God.

For withholden from the house of your God

Are the meat offering and the drink offering.

14. Sanctify a fast.

Call a solemn gathering.

Bring together the Elders

All the inhabitants of the land

In the house of Jehovah your God

And cry unto Jehovah

15. Woe! For the Day!

Because near is the day of Jehovah

Even like destruction from Shaddai\*2 it comes.

16. Is not the food cut off before our eyes?

From the house of our God joy and gladness.

17. The seeds have perished under their clods.

The garners become desolate

The storehouses are broken down

For withered is the corn.

18. Hear the cattle groan!

The herds of cattle are bewildered,

For there is no feeding place for them.

Also the flocks of sheep are made to suffer\*3

19. To Thee, Jehovah, I cry,

For the fire has consumed the goodly places of the desert

And a flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

20. Also the cattle of the field look Up\*4 unto Thee

For the streams of water are dried up,

And a fire hath consumed the goodly places of the desert.

(\*1 We leave these four words untranslated for reasons which will be given in the exposition.)

(\*2 The only time Shaddai (Almighty) is used in Joel. In the Hebrew there is a resemblance of sound between "destruction" and "Shaddai.")

(\*3 The Hebrew word, which we translate "made to suffer" means in its root "to be guilty.")

(\*4 Another word different from the 19th verse is used, though nearly all translators use "cry." it is more a groaning, desirous looking up.)

## CHAPTER 2

1. Blow the trumpet in Zion,

Sound an alarm in the mount of my holiness.

Let all the dwellers of the land tremble,

For the day of Jehovah cometh,

For it is near at hand.

2. A day of darkness and gloom

A day of clouds and thick darkness,  
Like the dawn spread upon the mountains;--  
A people numerous and strong!  
Never hath there been the like before,  
Neither shall the like come again,  
in the years of many generations.

3. A fire devoureth before them,  
And behind them a flame burneth;  
Before them the land is as the garden of Eden,  
And behind them a desolate wilderness,  
Yea, and nothing can escape them.
4. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses,  
And like the horsemen shall they run.
5. Like the noise of chariots,  
On the mountain tops, they shall leap,  
Like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble,  
Like a strong people set in battle array
6. Before them the peoples are in distress  
All faces turn to paleness.
7. They run like mighty men  
They climb the wall like men of war;  
And they march each one in his ways,  
And they turn not aside from their ranks.

8. Nor cloth one press upon another

A mighty one\*5 marches in the high road.

They fall upon the dart, but are not wounded.

9. They spread themselves in the city.

They run along upon the wall,

They climb up into the houses,

They enter in by the windows like a thief

10. The earth trembleth before them,

The heavens shake,

The sun and the moon are darkened,

And the stars withdraw their shining.

11. And Jehovah uttereth His voice before his army

For very great is His host,

For He that executeth His Word is mighty;

For great is the day of Jehovah and very terrible,

And who can stand it?

12. Yet even now, saith Jehovah,

Return unto Me with all your heart,

With fasting and with weeping and with mourning.

13. And rend your heart and not your garments,

And return unto Jehovah your God,

For He is gracious and merciful,

Slow to anger and of great loving kindness



And repenteth Him of the evil.

14. Who knoweth He may return and repent

And leave a blessing behind,

An oblation and a drink offering

For Jehovah your God.

15. Blow the trumpet in Zion, Sanctify a fast.

16. Call out a solemn assembly,

Gather the people.

Sanctify a congregation.

Assemble the old men.

Gather the children,

And those that suck the breasts;

Let the bridegroom leave his chamber

And the bride her closet;

17. Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah,

Weep between the porch and the altar,

And let them say:--

"Spare Thy people, O Jehovah,

And give not Thine heritage to reproach

That the nations should rule over them.\*6

Wherefore should they say among the peoples

"Where is their God?"

18. Then Jehovah will be jealous for His people:

And will have pity on His people.

19. And Jehovah will answer and say to His people:

Behold I am sending to you the corn,

The new wine and the oil;

And ye shall be satisfied therewith.

And I will no longer make you

For a reproach among the nations

20. And I will remove afar from you the one from the North

And will drive him into a dry and desolate land,

His face toward the Eastern sea

His rear toward the Western sea

And his stench shall arise

And his ill odor shall ascend,

For he hath lifted himself up to do great things.

21. Fear not, O Land

Be glad and rejoice,

For Jehovah doeth great things.

22. Fear not, ye beasts of the field!

For the pastures of the desert spring forth,

The tree beareth her fruit

The fig tree and the vine give their strength.

23. Ye children of Zion, be glad and rejoice

In Jehovah your God;

For He giveth you the early rain in righteousness,

He causeth to descend for you the showers,

The early and the latter rain as before.

24. And the floors shall be full of corn,

And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

25. And I will restore to you the years,

Which the Arbeh hath eaten.

The Jelek, the Chasel and the Gazam,

My great army, which I sent among you.

26. Then ye shall be in abundance, and be satisfied

And praise the name of Jehovah your God,

Who has dealt wondrously with you,

You My people shall never be ashamed.

27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,

And that I Jehovah am your God, and none else.

And My people shall never be ashamed,

28. And it shall come to pass afterwards,

I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh,

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;

Your old men shall dream dreams,

Your young men shall see visions.

29. Yea, even upon the men servants and the maid servants,

In those days will I pour out My Spirit.

30. And I will give wonders in the heaven and on earth,

Blood, and fire and pillars of smoke.

31. The sun shall be turned to darkness,

And the moon into blood,

Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come.

32. And it shall come to pass

Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,

As Jehovah hath said,

Even for the remnant whom Jehovah shall call.

(\*5 This is the literal meaning.)

(\*6 Or, "they that should be a byword of the nations.")

### **CHAPTER 3**

1. For behold in those days and in that time,

When I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem;

2. I will also bring together all nations,

And will bring down into the valley of Jehoshaphat;

And there will I judge them on account of My people,

And My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations,

And they divided My land.

3. And they cast lots for My people,

They gave a boy for a harlot,

And sold a girl for wine, and drank it.

4. Yea also, what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon,  
And all the borders of Philistia?  
Would you requite Me with retaliation?  
If you retaliate  
Swiftly and speedily will I bring your recompense  
Upon your own head.
5. Because ye have taken My silver and gold,  
And have brought into your temples My very best things
6. And the children of Judah and of Jerusalem,  
Ye sold to the children of the Greeks,  
That ye might remove them far from their border.
7. Behold I will raise them up out of the place whither ye sold them,  
And I will return the retaliation upon your own head.
8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters  
Into the hands of the sons of Judah.  
And they shall sell them to the Sabeans to a far off nation.  
For Jehovah hath spoken it.
9. Proclaim this among the nations:  
Declare a war!  
Arouse the mighty ones!  
Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up!
10. Beat your ploughshares into swords,  
And your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weak say, I am strong.

11. Come together,

All ye nations round about

Gather yourselves together.

Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down,

O, Jehovah!

12. Let the nations arise and come up

To the valley of Jehoshaphat,

For there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.

13. Put in the sickle,

For the harvest is ripe;

Come--Tread!

For the wine-press is full,

The vats overflow;

For their wickedness is great.

14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of Jehovah is at hand in the valley of decision.

15. The sun and the moon are darkened

And the stars withdraw their shining.

16. And Jehovah shall roar from Zion,

And send forth His voice from Jerusalem;

And the heavens and the earth shall shake;

But Jehovah will be a refuge for His people

And a fortress for the sons of Israel.

17. And ye shall know that I, Jehovah, your God,

Dwell in Zion, My holy mountain;

And Jerusalem shall be holy,

And strangers shall no more pass through her.

18. And it shall come to pass in that day

That the mountains shall drop down new wine,

And the hills shall flow with milk,

And all the river beds of Judah shall be full with waters,

And a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah,

And shall water the valley of Shittim.

19. Egypt shall be a desolation

And Edom shall be a desolate wilderness.

For their violence against the children of Judah,

Because they shed innocent blood in their land.

20. But Judah shall abide forever.

And Jerusalem from generation to generation.

21. And I will purge them from the blood

From which I had not purged them

And Jehovah will dwell in Zion.

### **Analysis and Annotations**

I. THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

II. THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: THE RUIN, THE REPENTANCE AND THE RESTORATION

III. THE EVENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD: ISRAEL'S ENEMIES JUDGED AND THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

**I. THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS**

## CHAPTER 1

1. The prophet's appeal (1:1-4)
2. The call to the drunkards (1:5-7)
3. The call to the people and the priests (1:8-14)
4. The day of the Lord and the suffering land (1:15-18)
5. The prayer of the prophet (1: 19-20)

Verses 1-4. The prophet announces that it is the Word of Jehovah he utters, which came to him. Verses 2 and 3 are an introduction to the description which follows the great calamity which had befallen the land. It is in the form of an appeal. What had happened to the land is of such a fearful character that it is unprecedented. The visitation of the land by the locust plague is to be related to future generations, because there is a great prophetic meaning as to the future attached to the locusts, which will be pointed out later. The fourth verse we render in a way our own, leaving the words of the destroying insects untranslated.

What the Gazam left, the Arbeh hath devoured;

And what the Arbeh left, the Jelek hath devoured;

And what the Jelek left, the Chasel hath devoured.

We left the Hebrew words untranslated because they do not express insects of different species; they are one insect, the locust, in a fourfold stage. Gazam means "to gnaw off," Arbeh is "to be many"; this is the common name of the locusts on account of their migratory habits. Jelek is "to lick off," and Chasel means "to devour or consume." The locust passes through a fourfold stage in its development to full growth. First, it is the gnawing locust, when first hatched; then it gets its wings and flies about; after that it starts in its destructive work by licking off whatever it finds, and, finally, it reaches its full growth and devours everything in its path. (Many foolish applications have been made of these locusts. one of the most ridiculous is the one made by a certain woman-healer in her book *Lost and Restored*.)

The locust plague which laid Israel's land bare was a judgment from the Lord. It was one of the judgments the Lord sent upon Egypt, and Moses had prophetically announced that the Lord would use them to punish his people (see Deut. 28:38, 42).

But these literal locusts, which fell literally upon the land and destroyed in a short time all vegetation, are symbolic of other agencies which were to be used later in Israel's history to bring judgment upon the land and the people. They are typical of Gentile armies, as stated in the second chapter, where the Lord calls them "My great army." Here is unquestionably a prophetic forecast as to the future of the land. From Daniel's prophecy we learn twice that four world powers should subjugate Israel and prey upon the land: Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Graeco-Macedonia and Rome. Zechariah, also, in one of his night visions, beheld four horns, and these four horns scattered Judah and Jerusalem. We see, therefore, in the locusts, first, the literal locusts which destroyed everything in vegetation at the time Joel lived, and these locusts are symbolical of future judgments executed upon the land and the nations by the prophetically announced world powers. At the close of the "times of the Gentiles," during which Jerusalem is trodden down, the final invasion of the land takes place; it is this which is described in the second chapter.

Verses 5-7. The first swarm had probably appeared in the fall; only the vineyards had not yet



been harvested. They attacked the vineyards and speedily the vines and the grapes disappeared under the onslaught. The drinkers of wine were therefore to suffer first. That there was much drunkenness among the people Israel, especially in the days of their prosperity, may be learned from Amos 6:1-6; Isa. 5:11, 24:7-9, 28:7, etc. In verse 6 the locusts are described as a nation, mighty without number, with lion's teeth. This confirms the typical application to Gentile nations of the future who would devastate the land. See, furthermore, Numbers 13:33, Isaiah 40:22 and Jeremiah 51:14, where the same comparison is made.

Verses 8-14. On account of the great disaster the people are called to mourn and put on sackcloth. "Lament like a virgin, girded with sackcloth, for the husband of her youth." This is a significant expression. Israel in her relationship to Jehovah is here indicated. We are reminded of Isaiah 3:26 concerning Jerusalem, "And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she, being desolate, shall sit on the ground;" and Isaiah 54:6, "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." So great was the havoc wrought that the meal and drink offering was cut off from the house of the Lord so that the priests mourned, the servants of Jehovah. This is their mournful chant:

Wasted is the field,

Mourning is the land,

For wasted is the corn,

The new vine is dried up,

The oil faileth.

This is followed by the call to lament for the husbandman and vinedressers. The whole harvest was gone, and besides the failure of the vine, the fig tree, the other trees are also mentioned, yea, "all the trees of the field are withered." On account of the severity of this visitation joy had left the children of men.

Then comes the definite call to the priests to lament and cry unto Jehovah and to sanctify a fast (verses 13-14). But there is no record of a response. At the close of this chapter the Prophet alone raises his voice to Jehovah. We shall learn in the second chapter of the time of the national repentance of Israel.

Verses 15-18. For the first time we meet the day of the Lord (Yom Jehovah), that phrase used so frequently in all the prophetic books. The 15th verse is an exclamation of the Prophet as before his vision that day appears. In the midst of the weird description of the calamity, present in Joel's day, he beholds a greater judgment approaching. It is the same day he beholds which the other prophets mention; each time Joel uses this expression it means the coming day of the Lord, still approaching. It may be noticed that the five passages in Joel in which "the day of the Lord" is mentioned are progressive.

For a comparative study of this important phrase we quote the leading passage of the different prophets.

Isaiah. The phrase "in that day" is found many times in his book. We mention 2:2-5, 10:22; 4; 13:6-13. The great glory predictions of Isaiah 54, 60, 61 and 62 are all related to this day.

Jeremiah. He also speaks of that day (chapters 25:30-33; 30:18-24).

Ezekiel. Chapters 7 and 8. From chapters 37-38 we have the record of great events both of judgment and blessing which will come to pass in connection with that day. While Daniel does not

use in his book the phrase "day of the Lord" nearly all his great prophecies are connected with that day. It is the day in which the stone smites the great image, representing the times of the Gentiles, and demolishes it; the day on which "the Son of Man" comes in the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom. Hosea points to that day in chapters 2 and 3, as well as in the closing chapter. Amos witnesses to it in chapters 1:2, 6:3, 9:2, 15. Obadiah, who lived about the same time as Joel, speaks of the day in verse 15 of his brief prophecy. Micah in his prophecy refers to it in chapter 5:15. In Nahum the day is described in which the Lord will deal in judgment with the wicked world cities (see chapter 1:1-9). The third chapter of Habakkuk reveals that day. Zephaniah has a great deal more to say about that day than the preceding prophetic books (chapters 1:14-18; 2 and 3). Haggai bears witness to it in chapter 2:6-7. (Compare with Heb. 12:26-29.) Zechariah uses the phrase "in that day" many times, especially in the last three chapters. Malachi reveals the day in chapters 3:1-3 and 4:1-3).

We learn from all this what a prominent place the day of the Lord occupies in the prophecies. It must be so, for it is the day of manifestation and consummation. Joel beheld here for the first time this day.

Then follows an additional description of the great calamity which had come upon the land in Joel's day (verses 16-18).

Verses 19-20. Joel was, like all the other prophets, a man of prayer. No other mention is made by the prophet concerning himself, but this brief word is sufficient to give us a glimpse of his inner life and his trust in the Lord. He cried to Jehovah in the great distress.

## **II. THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: THE REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION OF ISRAEL**

### **CHAPTER 2**

1. The alarm sounded and the day at hand (2:1-2)
2. The invading army from the north (2:3-11)
3. The repentance of the people and cry for help (2:12-17)
4. "Then." The great change (2:18)
5. Promises of restoration, and the early and latter rain (2:19-27)
6. The outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh (2:28-31)
7. Deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem (2:32)

Verses 1-2. With this chapter we reach the heart of the prophecy of Joel. The description of the literal locust plague is now no longer continued. As we have shown the literal locusts in their different stages were symbolical of nations laying waste the land as the locusts had done. Dispensationally the first chapter stands for the entire times of the Gentiles, which began with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:36-38), and they continue till the time comes when the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that cannot be destroyed. The second chapter takes us at once to the end of the times of the Gentiles, when the day of the Lord is to be enacted. Before the Lord appears in that day, the greatest distress will be upon the land and the people; there will be a great time of trouble such as never was before (Matt. 24:21). The remnant of His people will cry to the Lord for intervention and for deliverance, and the Lord will answer their cry and deliver them. Then their land becomes once more like the garden of Eden, there will be a great outpouring of the Spirit upon all

flesh and from Jerusalem the great kingdom-center blessings will extend to all the nations.

This whole chapter as well as the next one is therefore unfulfilled. Nothing of it has been fulfilled. Before it can be fulfilled a part of the people Israel must be restored to the land of promise and the ancient ceremonies and institutions be at least partially restored.

The chapter begins with the sounding of the alarm for "the Day of Jehovah cometh, for it is near at hand." The last prophetic week of Daniel is now in process of fulfillment and near its end. (See annotations on Dan. 9.) A part of the people are back in the land, having returned there in unbelief, just as we see it today in the Zionistic movement. But in their midst will also be found a God-fearing remnant. The blowing of the trumpet shows that they have revived their ancient custom (Num. 10:1, 2, 9). We also mention that trumpets are often connected with the appearing of the Lord and the restoration of Israel. In the second verse the day is described and may be compared with Zephaniah 1:15-16 and Isaiah 60:2. Then there is an invading army announced which is fully described in the verses which follow. The words, "As the dawn spread upon the mountains," are a description of the day and not of the army, as some have taken it. On the one hand the day of the Lord is a day of darkness and gloom, on the other hand it is "like the dawn spread upon mountains." After the darkness, the morning light will break "the morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4).

Verses 3-11. Many armies in past history have occupied the land of Israel and wasted it, but here is the coming great invasion from the north. This invasion is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah also. The Assyrian who came in Isaiah's day to take Jerusalem is the type of the final Assyrian who threatens the land and the people with destruction. He is also prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes, who came into the land of Israel as the predicted little horn, rising from one of the divisions of the Graeco-Macedonian Empire (Dan. 8).

This army of Israel's enemies finds the land like the garden of Eden; it has been restored through political Zionism, irrigated and cultivated. The Jews are at it now, determined to make Palestine the garden-spot of the world, their Eden, as it has been said. Then comes the rude awakening. They thought themselves safe; they dreamed that their plans they had made without trusting in the Lord and without true repentance, had fully succeeded. But now the greatest trouble of their long history of blood and tears is at hand. The land is once more stripped of its beauty.

Before them the land is as the garden of Eden,

And behind them a desolate wilderness,

Yea, and nothing can escape them.

The Lord uses these destructive hosts to humble His people, to show them that He is their help, when this great calamity is upon them. The symbolical language here is characteristic of other prophecies.

The earth trembleth before them;

The heavens shake,

The sun and the moon are darkened,

And the stars withdraw their shining

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For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible.

Compare this with the following passages: Isa, 11:11; Hab, 1:6, 12; Zech, 14:3, 4.

Verses 12-17. Here is the Lord calling to His people to return unto Him with true repentance (compare with Hosea 5:15-6:1). And during that great tribulation there will be a truly penitent portion of the people who turn to Him in the manner described in this chapter. It is this remnant which will be saved in that day, while the impenitent part will be cut off in judgment. Ezekiel 20:38 and Zech. 13:8-9 speak of this. What Moses spoke long ago now takes place (Deut. 30:1-4). The many prophetic prayers recorded in the Psalms, as pointed out in the annotations of that book, will then be offered up by this godly waiting remnant (Psa. 44:13-14, 115:2-3, 79:9-10, etc.). This mourning and prayer for deliverance precedes the visible manifestation of the Lord in the day of His coming. When at last deliverance has come there will be another lamentation. This is found in Zech. 12:9-14 and in Rev. 1:7.

Verse 18. "Then Jehovah will be jealous for His land and will have pity on His people." Here is the great change. Up to this point we have seen nothing but calamity and judgments. Literal locusts had devoured the land--the types of nations which would prey upon the land. They came, and Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles terminated in Jacob's trouble, out of which they are to be saved (Jer. 30:7). We saw their great repentance. Here is the answer from above. When their power is completely gone (Deut. 32:36), then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people. Often this little word "then" is found in the prophetic Word marking the great change, from Israel's past judgments and rejection to deliverance and glory. The following passages should be carefully examined and compared with the 18th verse here: Isa. 14:25, 24:23, 32:16, 35:5-6, 58:8, 14, 60:5, 66:12; Ezek. 28:25-26, etc.

The Lord's personal manifestation is not mentioned here. The deliverance does not come apart from the second coming of our Lord. The entire prophetic Word bears witness to this. "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:3-4). "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in glory" (Psa. 102:16). "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry, yea, roar, He shall prevail against His enemies" (Isa. 42:13).

Verses 19-27. Here is His gracious answer. He will bless their land and make it fruitful once more, as it used to be, the land flowing with milk and honey. It is foolish to spiritualize the terms corn, new wine and oil. Yet it has been done. one of the older commentators of this book says on this verse about corn, wine and oil, that it has been fulfilled in the church. The corn he applies to the body of Christ, the wine to the blood of Christ, and the oil to the Spirit. Earthly blessings, such as belong to His earthly people are exclusively in view. Then they shall be no longer a reproach among the nations. Inasmuch as they are still a reproach we know that this promise is still future in its fulfillment. The one from the north will be overthrown and pass away forever. That all this cannot mean the Babylonian captivity and the small remnant which returned to the land may be learned from the statement "no longer" a reproach.

Because the Lord does all this they are commanded to rejoice, the children of Zion, which does not mean a spiritual Zion, but God's only true Zion. The early and the latter rain is restored to the land. Of late this term, too, has been strangely misapplied. It has been claimed that the early and latter rain mean spiritual blessing. The early rain, it is said, means the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and the latter rain, these deluded people tell us, is another Pentecost, a greater manifestation of the Spirit. This latter rain, they teach, consists, according to their conception, in a restoration of "Pentecostal gifts" and is especially evidenced in making strange sounds, which, it is claimed, is the original gift of tongues. This unscriptural teaching has led to all kinds of fanaticism and worse things than that.

Nowhere in the Bible is there warrant for us to believe that "the early and latter rain" has a spiritual significance. To say that the early rain and the latter rain typify blessings and manifestations of the spirit of God, peculiar to the opening of this present age and to its close is extremely fanciful and cannot be verified by the Scriptures. It is strange that even men who seem to possess considerable light have endorsed this kind of exposition, which has worked such harm among so many Christian people. There is absolutely no prediction anywhere in the New Testament that the present age is to close with "a latter rain" experience, a time when the Holy Spirit is poured out and that in greater measure. This age, according to divine revelation, ends in apostasy and complete departure from God and His truth (2 Thess. 2:3-12). After the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, for the formation of the Church, the body of Christ, there is nowhere to be found a promise in the Church Epistles that another outpouring is to take place, by which a part of the Church is to get into possession again of the different sign gifts. The enemy of souls has made good use of these distorted teachings to bring in his most subtle delusions.

The rain has altogether a literal meaning. Read carefully the following passages for a confirmation: Lev. 26:4; Deut. 11:14-17; 1 Kings 8:33-35 and Jer. 3:3.

Then all the harm done by the locusts, the army the Lord used in judging His people, will be restored. "And My people shall never be ashamed" (verse 27). This again is sufficient proof that all this remains unfulfilled.

Verses 28-32. This interesting passage invites our closest attention. The almost general interpretation of this prophecy has been that it found its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured forth. Most expositors confine the fulfillment to that event while others claim that Pentecost was only the beginning of the fulfillment and that the event which occurred once continues to occur throughout this Christian age. We quote from one of the best commentaries. "But however certain it may be that the fulfillment took place at the first Christian feast of Pentecost, we must not stop at this one Pentecostal miracle. The address of the Apostle Peter by no means requires this limitation, but rather contains distinct indications that Peter himself saw nothing more therein than the commencement of the fulfillment, but a commencement indeed, which embraced the ultimate fulfillment, as the germ enfolds the tree; for if not only the children of the apostles' contemporaries but also those that were afar off--i.e., not foreign Jews, but the far off heathen, were to participate in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which commenced on Pentecost must continue as long as the Lord shall receive into His kingdom those that are still standing afar, i.e., until the fullness of the Gentiles shall have entered the kingdom of God."

There is, however, no Scriptural foundation for the statement that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit commenced on Pentecost must continue throughout this present age. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. He was poured out once, and nowhere in the New Testament is there a continued or repeated outpouring of the Holy Spirit promised. The difficulty with interpreting this great prophecy of Joel of having been fulfilled on Pentecost and being fulfilled throughout this age is that which follows in the next two verses. Wonders in heaven and on earth, fire, pillars of smoke, a darkened sun and a blood-red moon are mentioned, and that in connection with the day of Jehovah, which, as we have seen is the great theme of Joel's vision. These words have been generally applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, which followed the day of Pentecost. The spiritualizing method has been fully brought into play to overcome the difficulties the 30th and 31st verses raise. The terrible day of Jehovah, it is claimed, is the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus we read in the commentary of Patrick and Lowth: "This (verse 30) and the following verse principally point out the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans, a judgment justly inflicted upon the Jewish nation for their resisting the Holy Spirit and contempt of the means of grace." We quote another leading commentator on Joel 2:30, Dr. Clarke. He states: "This refers to the fearful sights, dreadful portents and destructive commotions by which the Jewish polity was finally overthrown and the Christian religion finally established in the Roman empire. See how our Lord applies this prophecy in Matthew 24:29 and the parallel texts." And in verse 31 ("the sun shall

be turned into darkness") Clarke says "it means the Jewish polity, civil and ecclesiastical, shall be entirely destroyed." Others give these words the same spiritualized meaning. These learned doctors tell us that Joel 2:30 and 31 relate to the destruction of the nation, and the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Jews! This is a fair example of the havoc which a Bible interpretation makes, which ignores the great dispensational facts revealed in the Word of God. But inasmuch as the 32nd verse, the last verse in this second chapter of Joel, reveals that there shall be deliverance in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem after these signs and wonders, and the continuation of the prophecy in the third chapter shows the judgment of the enemies of the people Israel, God's ancient people, such interpretations appear at once as fundamentally wrong.

It is strange that all these expositors use the word "fulfillment" in connection with this prophecy, saying, that Peter said that the day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of what is written by Joel. But the Holy Spirit did not use the word "fulfillment" at all. He purposely avoided such a statement. In so many passages in the New Testament we find the phrase "that it might be fulfilled," but in making use of the prophecy in Acts, chapter 2, this phrase is not used and instead of it we read that Peter said, "But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). There is a great difference between this word and an out and out declaration of the fulfillment of that passage. Peter's words call the attention to the fact that something like that which took place on the day of Pentecost had been predicted by Joel, but his words do not claim that Joel's prophecy was there and then fulfilled. Nor does he hint at a continued fulfillment or coming fulfillment during this present age. The chief purpose of the quotation of that prophecy on the day of Pentecost was to point out to the Jews, many of whom were scoffing, that the miraculous thing which had happened so suddenly in their midst was fully confirmed by what Joel had foretold would be the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place, but not in the full sense as given in the prophecy of Joel. He came for a special purpose, which was the formation of the Church and for this purpose He is still on earth.

Without following the events on Pentecost and their meaning it is evident from the entire prophecy, which precedes this prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit, that these words have never been fulfilled. We might briefly ask, What is necessary according to the contents of this second chapter in Joel, before this prophecy can be accomplished? We just mention what we have already learned before in our exposition. The people Israel must be partly restored to their land, that great invasion from the north, bringing such trouble to the land must have taken place, then there must also have come the intervention of the Lord and He must be jealous for His land and pity His people, then at that time this great outpouring of the Spirit of God will take place. It stands in the closest connection with the restoration of Israel. The promises which are Israel's (Rom. 9:4) may be grouped into two classes, those which pertain to the land, earthly blessings and supremacy over the nations, and spiritual blessings, such as knowing the Lord, walking in His ways, being a kingdom of priests and prophets. The earthly blessings are accomplished by the power of Jehovah when He is manifested as their deliverer and the spiritual blessings will be conferred upon them by the outpouring of the Spirit.

The word "afterwards" with which this prophecy is introduced refers to the same period of time as the phrase "in the latter days," that is, the days when the Lord will redeem His earthly people and be merciful to His land.

Therefore when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost it was not in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This prophecy has never been fulfilled nor will it be fulfilled during this present age, in which the Church is being formed, which is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. After this is accomplished the Lord will begin His relationship with His earthly people, when He appears in His day then they will experience the fulfillment of this great prediction.

There are numerous passages in the Old Testament which shed interesting light upon this future outpouring of the Spirit (see Isa. 32:15, 44:3-4, 59:19-21; Ezek. 36:27-28, 37:14, 39:29).

Verse 32. The great coming outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh will result in salvation. It is blessedly true now that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," but it will be also true in that day. The word our Lord spoke, "salvation is of the Jews" will find its largest fulfillment. The nations will then be joined to the Lord in the kingdom (Zech. 2:11).

### **III. THE EVENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD: ISRAEL'S ENEMIES JUDGED AND THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED**

#### **CHAPTER 3**

1. The judgment of the nations (3:1-8)
2. The preceding warfare of the nations and how it ends (3:9-16)
3. Jehovah in the midst of His People (3:17-21)

Verses 1-8. The first verse specifies the time when Jehovah will do what He announces in the two verses which follow. It will be in those days, in that time, when the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is brought back. Clearly then up to this time this cannot yet have been, for the captivity of His people is not yet ended. They are still scattered in the great dispersion among the nations of the earth. The time is future when the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is brought back. Israel, the ten tribes are not mentioned here, but they are included in the prophecy; they will likewise be brought back. Joel only mentions Judah, because His prophecy was addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. The captivity, or dispersion, which is the same thing, of the people Israel will not end till divine power accomplishes it according to the many promises in the Word of God. And when at last the heavens are silent no longer and Jehovah in His power begins to fulfil His promises and their captivity ends, it will mean judgment for the nations.

It is Jehovah Himself who speaks, what He is going to do in that day, when He arises and has mercy on Zion. "I will also bring together all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat." How the Lord will bring these nations together and then accomplish His purpose is revealed in verses 9-12. We therefore pass it by for the present till we reach the second part of this chapter. But here is also the place mentioned where this great judgment of nations will be executed. It will be in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The word means translated "Jehovah judges." This name occurs elsewhere in the Word of God. King Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphat and he was the son of Nimshi (2 Kings 9:2). Significant names of the king who had to judge, for Jehu means "He is Jehovah;" Jehoshaphat, "Jehovah judges;" Nimshi, "Jehovah reveals."

In 2 Chronicles 20 we read the account of King Jehoshaphat's victory over hostile nations. But the place where this took place is not the valley of Jehoshaphat, but it was called "Berachah," that is blessing. We mention this for some expositors have claimed that the place where King Jehoshaphat brought judgment upon these nations is the valley of which Joel speaks.

The valley of Jehoshaphat must be looked for in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. It is generally placed in the valley of the Kidron on the East of Jerusalem. It may not yet be in existence. In Zechariah 14 we read of the same events which are here predicted. When the Lord appears His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives in that day. The Mount of Olives will then cleave in the midst and there will be formed a very great valley (Zech. 14:4). This great valley may be the valley where the Lord judges the nations.

In the valley of Jehoshaphat the Lord will deal with the nations and His judgment will be on account of His people and heritage Israel. The nations scattered them and divided His land. They treated His people like slaves, casting lots for His people, sold a girl for wine and drank it.

The great sin of the nations, the Gentile world-powers, is the sin against Israel. This is repeatedly mentioned by God's prophets. The foundation of the judgment of the nations of which

our Lord speaks in Matthew 25 is likewise the treatment of the Jew. Read also Psalms 79:1-3, 83:1-6; Isaiah, 29:1-8; 34:1-3; Jeremiah 25:13-17; Zechariah 1:14-15, 12:2-3.

In Joel's day such wickedness as described here of casting lots for His people and selling boys and girls was partially known. The Philistines had done this, as well as Tyre and Sidon. But these words were fulfilled during the Babylonian captivity and in that great dispersion which was brought about by the Roman Empire. After the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 the very thing happened spoken by the prophet. Nearly a million and a half of human beings perished in Jerusalem and the land in that awful warfare. Over 100,000 were taken prisoners. These hundred thousand Jews were disposed by Titus according to Josephus in the following manner: "Those under seventeen years of age were publicly sold; of the remainder, some were executed immediately, some sent away to work in the Egyptian mines (which was worse than death), some kept for public shows to fight with wild beasts in all the chief cities; only the tallest and most handsome were kept for the triumphal procession in Rome." Jews were sold for so small a price as a measure of barley; thousands were thus disposed of. And what else could we add from the history of centuries, the cruel and terrible persecutions God's heritage suffered, the thousands and tens of thousands massacred, tortured, outraged and sold as slaves. Have we not beheld but recently similar horrors in Germany? And that history is not yet finished. Outbreaks of hatred against the heritage Israel are still to come and the time of Jacob's trouble soon to come will eclipse all their former suffering. It will be a time of trouble such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). The day will come when the Lord will judge the nations for the evil they have done.

Verses 9-16. This is a prophecy showing what precedes the judgment of these nations. The judgment hosts of the Lord, the angels, are seen coming down, then He appears in all His majesty, while sun and moon are darkened. It is a great dramatic scene which the Spirit of God unfolds. We arrange it, adding the different speakers, to bring out its full value:

#### **The Lord speaking:**

Proclaim this among the nations;

Declare a war,

Arouse the mighty ones,

Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up!

Beat your ploughshares into swords,

And your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weak say, I am strong.

Come together



All ye nations round about  
Gather yourselves together.

**The Prayer of the Prophet:**

Thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down,  
O Jehovah!

**The Lord speaking:**

Let the nations arise and come up  
To the valley of Jehoshaphat,  
For there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.

**The Lord to His judgment hosts:**

Put in the sickle,  
For the harvest is ripe;  
Come--Tread!  
For the wine-press is full,  
The vats overflow;  
For their wickedness is great.

**The Prophet beholding the gathering:**

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!  
For the day of Jehovah is at hand in the valley of decision.

The sun and the moon are darkened

And the stars withdraw their shining.

And Jehovah shall roar from Zion

And send forth His voice from Jerusalem,

And the heavens and the earth shall shake;

But Jehovah will be a refuge for His people

And a fortress for the sons of Israel.

Throughout the prophetic Word we read that great nations confederated will oppose God and His purposes when this age closes. There will be a great western confederacy, the restored Roman Empire. (See annotations on Dan. 2 and 7.) There will also be a great northeastern alliance of nations. This is in view here. Consult Psalm 2, 68:1-6; Isaiah 29:1-8, 34:1-3; Jeremiah 25:29-33; Ezekiel 38, Zechariah 12, 14, and Revelation 19:19. Judgment then falls upon these opposing nations. The judgment is mentioned as reaping and treading the winepress, the same as in Revelation 14:14-20.

Verses 17-21. Like nearly all the other prophetic books Joel ends with the vision of the kingdom and the Lord dwelling in the midst of His people. He will appear in all His glory. Jehovah will be a refuge for His people. Then they will come to that knowledge which they so long refused, that the delivering Jehovah is their God. But the Jehovah who appears there is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was in their midst and who was delivered by the people to be crucified. What a day it will be when "They will look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him" (Zech. 12:10). He will dwell in Zion, the mountain of glory. The glory from above will find a resting place on that holy hill. There He will be enthroned as King (Psa. 2:6). From there the glory will be spread over all (Isa. 4:5-6; Psa. 68:16). "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell for I have desired it" (Psa. 132:13-14). It is the literal Zion and not something spiritual. Even good expositors of the Bible have missed the mark. One good commentator says: "For Zion or Jerusalem is of course not the Jerusalem of the earthly Palestine, but the sanctified and glorified city of the living God, in which the Lord will be eternally united with His redeemed, sanctified and glorified Church." Such exposition emanates from ignorance of God's purposes with His earthly people and in not dividing the Word of Truth rightly.

Joel speaks also of the judgment which will fall upon Egypt in that day. Isaiah also tells of judgment, but through him we learn that Egypt will turn to the Lord and the Lord will graciously heal Egypt (Isa. 19). Judah will abide forever. His people will be cleansed. Jehovah, our ever blessed Lord, will dwell in Zion. The happy and glorious state of the land and the whole earth during the millennium is thus tersely stated. For when He reigns there will be righteousness and peace; glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. Thus ends the great vision of Joel, the son of Pethuel. May the eye of faith behold these blessed revelations and may we live in anticipation of what is soon to be.