



THE BOOK OF JOEL

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROPHET

The Book of Joel was written by the prophet Joel, Acts 2:14-36, whose father's name was Pethuel, Joel 1:1. Although there are twelve other men with the same name mentioned in the Bible, we can't identify them with the author of this book.

In fact, all we know about Joel is what's found within the book itself. We do know that His name means, 'The Lord is God', and he was a very powerful prophet who boldly spoke the word of God. He was from Judah and was addressing the nation of Judah, especially southern Judah.

DATE

The date of the book is pretty much uncertain; some place it as written around 900 B.C., some place it around 400 B.C., which means they believe it was written after the exile, and still others date it around 830 B.C. It was probably written around the same time as Obadiah, Elijah and Elisha and around the time of King Joash.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Basically, God, through His prophet Joel, warns the people of Judah that they need to repent, but if they don't repent of their sins, then judgment would come, and they would be punished severely.

The book was written in response to a devastating event which totally destroyed the land, a plague of locusts had devoured everything in the land, of which we have no record and then a drought followed, it's during this drought which Joel writes his prophecy because at this time the whole land, all the animals and everyone living in it were suffering greatly, Joel 1:9.

Joel really wanted the people to understand that the locust plague and drought were God's doing in order to bring about their repentance. If they didn't repent, then even more destruction would come upon them. The good news is that, within all the doom and gloom, there was hope for the future, Joel 2:28-32.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction. Joel 1:1
2. The Locust Plague and Deliverance. Joel 1:2-2:27
3. God Will Act on the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:28-3:21

CHAPTER 1

‘The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel.’ Joel 1:1

This is all we know about Joel; his father’s name was Pethuel. It’s God who’s speaking through His prophet Joel, and his first word is the word ‘hear’. Oh, how people need to listen to God, even today!

When God speaks, everyone should be silent and listen to what He has to say. It’s such a shame that there are so many people who want to speak on ‘God’s behalf’ but they themselves, never listen to what He actually says. Hence, we have so many different religious groups in the world today and so many fragments of Christianity.

AN INVASION OF LOCUSTS

“Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors? Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation.” Joel 1:2-3

Joel first calls on the elders and then all who live in the land to hear and listen to what God is about to say to them, [Joel 1:2](#) / [Romans 10:9](#). What was God going to say to them?

Something so bad is happening that it would be spoken of for five generations. It was to be spoken of for generations to come, [Joel 1:3](#) / [Exodus 10:2](#) / [Psalms 78:5-7](#). The locust plague was going to be devastating; it was going to be so big that they would speak about it for five generations to come, [Isaiah 45:7](#) / [Amos 3:6](#).

Judgment is coming to Judah, the locust plague which happened in the past is now going to be used by Joel to speak of an army sent from God in the future. Like most of the Old Testament prophets, I doubt very much if Joel completely understood what was going to happen, [1 Peter 1:10-12](#).

‘What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips. A nation has invaded my land, a mighty army without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white.’ Joel 1:4-7

Locusts are around two and a half inches long and can fly up to twenty-five mph. It’s reported that one locust can eat the leaves on a tree in fifteen minutes. The female of the species is more dangerous than the male.

Back in 1915, there was a reported locust plague; they came from the Tarsus Mountains in the north through to Egypt in the south. Millions of locusts were captured and buried alive, and it took two months for all the trees to be destroyed down to the bark.

THREE THINGS ACCOMPANIED THIS PLAGUE

1. The noise of their wings.
2. There were so many of them that they blocked out the sun.
3. Their excrement fell like rain and was very acidic.

FOUR HEBREW WORDS USED FOR LOCUSTS

1. Yalek, meaning hedge eater.
2. Gazem, meaning creeping locusts.
3. Chasil, meaning devourer.
4. Arbeh, meaning swarming.

Because there are four kinds of locusts, this means it covers everything, Joel 1:4. This was total devastation, this is the picture it gives, this is what happened in the past.

Moses and Solomon had prophesied this kind of judgement before, Deuteronomy 28:38-39 / 1 Kings 8:37, but even then, God's people didn't recognise that God was behind it.

When we try to identify who this army of locusts is, we must bear in mind the past tense use of Joel's words 'has' and 'have' in Joel 1:4. Note that the KJV uses the words, the palmer worm, the canker worm, the caterpillar in Joel 1:4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the nation.

'That real locusts are intended there can be little doubt; but it is thought that this may be a double prophecy, and that the destruction by the Chaldeans may also be intended, and that the four kinds of locusts mentioned above may mean the four several attacks made on Judea by them. The first was in the last year of Nabonassar (father of Nebuchadnezzar), which was the third of Jehoiakim; the second, when Jehoiakim was taken prisoner in the eleventh year of his reign; the third, in the ninth year of Zedekiah; and the fourth, three years after, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Others say that they mean the four powers which have been enemies of the Jews:

1. The palmerworm, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans.
2. The locust, the Persians and the Medes.
3. The cankerworm, the Greeks, and particularly Antiochus Epiphanes.
4. The caterpillar, the Romans.

Others make them four kings: Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. But of such similitudes there is no end; and the best of them is arbitrary and precarious.'

Gifford, in his commentary, says the following concerning the identity of this nation.

'Some say that it also has reference to the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians. Others say that the four kinds of locusts represent four different attacks made on Judah. 1. The first during the third year of Jehoiakim's reign in Judah. 2. The second was when Jehoiakim was taken prisoner 11 years later. 3. The third during the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign in Judah. 4. The fourth, 3 years later, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem.'

'Still others suggest that the four kinds of insects represent the four powers that were the Jews' enemies. 1. The palmerworms are the Assyrians and the Chaldeans. 2. The locusts are the Medes and the Persians. 3. The cankerworms are the Greeks. 5. The caterpillar is the Romans.'

'Yet others make them out to represent four kings. One. Tiglath-Pileser, Assyrian king, 2 Kings 15-16. Two. Shalmaneser, successor of Tiglath-Pileser, who invaded Israel and carried ten tribes captive, 2 Kings 17-18. Three. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king who invaded Judah in the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18-19. Four. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who took Judah captive and destroyed Jerusalem, 2 Kings 24.'

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'The palmerworm, cankerworm, caterpillar, and locust, are not different insects, but in the original four different names of the locust, possibly representing it in different stages of growth; yet here in a climactic description, i.e.

‘swarm upon swarm.’ The use of synonyms for a common object is characteristic of Hebrew.’

Pliny says the following concerning the locust teeth. Locusts will gnaw with their teeth the doors of houses; so the teeth of locusts are described in [Revelation 9:8](#); this may denote the strength, cruelty, and voraciousness of the Chaldean army.’

Joel asks the drunkards to ‘wake up’, [Joel 1:5](#), and look at the devastation the locusts have caused. Notice that Joel describes the locust plague as a ‘nation’; [Joel 1:6](#).

This was going to be a strong nation which would come and ultimately devastate the whole land, [Joel 1:7](#) / [Proverbs 30:25-27](#). Even though the vine and fig trees belonged to God and were very important to their economy, [Joel 1:7](#), these too were totally destroyed, [Joel 1:10](#).

‘Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth, grieving for the betrothed of her youth. Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD. The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the olive oil fails. Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree—all the trees of the field—are dried up. Surely the people’s joy is withered away.’ Joel 1:8-12

In the custom of the Jews, if a virgin woman was engaged to a man, the man automatically became known as her husband; being engaged was as good as being married in Jewish law, [Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#) / [Isaiah 7:14](#) / [Matthew 1:19](#).

Sackcloth, [Joel 1:8](#), is a very coarse, rough fabric woven from flax or hemp and is usually worn as a sign of mourning. Notice that the grain, oil and crops are also affected, [Joel 1:9](#); this basically means that their religion is going to be affected, [Exodus 29:38](#).

If the farmers and vine-dressers couldn’t produce anything, there would be nothing to sacrifice, and so the priests would end up going hungry. Cereal crops and fruit trees, [Joel 1:10-11](#), signify that their day-to-day living is going to be affected, too, [Joel 1:11](#). No wonder there would be no joy, [Joel 1:12](#).

Ellicott, in his commentary, says the following concerning the new wine.

‘The necessities and delights of life are all gone: “the wine that maketh glad the heart of man, the oil that makes his face to shine, the bread that strengthened man’s heart’, [Psalms 104:15](#).’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As, when God pours out His blessings of nature, all nature seems to smile and be glad, and as the Psalmist says, “to shout for joy and sing” [Psalms 65:13](#), so when He withholds them, it seems to mourn, and, by its mourning, to reproach the insensibility of man.’

A CALL TO LAMENTATION

‘Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God and cry out to the LORD. Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds are shrivelled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up. How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering. To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field. Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness.’ Joel 1:13-20

Here we see Joel pleading for the people to cry out to the Lord. We see that he begins by telling the priests that they should put on sackcloth, mourn and wail, [Joel 1:13](#) / [Isaiah 22:12](#) / [Jeremiah 4:8](#) / [Jeremiah 6:26](#), and lead this plea by introducing a fast and bring everyone together, [Joel 1:14](#).

This is a call for repentance, and Joel is saying, ‘they know this has happened in the past, they know what it can do,’ and so now he has set them up and is going to tell them what all of this means. [Joel 2-3](#) is basically a commentary on [Joel 1](#).

This is a call by Joel to the people, and he tells them to repent and pray from their hearts. He starts with the ‘priests’, [Joel 1:13](#), which means this was to start from the top to the bottom, God starts with the people who should know better, [James 3:1](#).

God was withholding their grain and drink offerings, which means they couldn’t offer offerings, [Joel 1:13](#). And notice, God didn’t say, proclaim, or appoint a fast, but ‘sanctify’ it, [Joel 1:14](#).

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Many of the celebrations at the Temple were occasions of rejoicing over abundant harvests and the like, [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:13-15](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:6-7](#) / [Deuteronomy 26:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 26:10](#).’ Fasts were observed in times of distress along with confession of sin and prayer for divine favour, [Judges 20:26](#) / [1 Samuel 7:6](#) / [2 Samuel 12:16](#) / [1 Kings 21:27](#) / [Psalms 69:10](#) / [Ezra 10:6](#) / [Nehemiah 9:1](#) / [Jonah 3:5-9](#) / [Daniel 9:3](#). They are encouraged to summon the elders, [Joel 1:14](#) / [Leviticus 19:32](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:28](#), to cry out to God. The priests had to put on sackcloth, [Joel 1:13](#), which is a sign of mourning, and they were told to repent because this thing that was coming wasn’t very far away.

‘The day of the Lord is near’, [Joel 1:15](#), this was to be a day of destruction and judgement, and if the people didn’t repent, then all would suffer the consequences.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The phrase ‘The day of the Lord’ is found five times throughout the Book of Joel, [Joel 1:15](#) / [Joel 2:1](#) / [Joel 2:11](#) / [Joel 2:31](#) / [Joel 3:14](#). In the Old Testament, it’s used to describe when God vents His anger, [Isaiah 13:9](#) / [Zephaniah 2:2-3](#) and the day when He stands against His enemies, [Ezekiel 13:5](#).

Notice that Joel says that the day is ‘near’, [Joel 1:15](#). Other prophets used this same phrase, [Isaiah 13:6](#) / [Ezekiel 30:3](#) / [Obadiah 15](#) / [Zephaniah 1:7](#) / [Zephaniah 1:14](#).

In the New Testament that day is called, ‘the Day of the Lord’, [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#) / [2 Thessalonians 2:2](#) / [2 Peter 3:10](#). This is the Day when the Lord will return for the final time with His saints and His angels, this is the Day when He will judge the nations, [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:4](#) / [2 Peter 3:10](#), and rule over them, [Matthew 25:31-46](#) / [Revelation 19:11-15](#).

Joel asks two questions, [Joel 1:16](#), to which the answer is ‘yes’ to both of them. God never does something without prior warning, and He never punishes people without letting them know why.

The results of the terrible drought and the devastation caused by the locusts are described in [Joel 1:17-20](#). Every animal, everyone and even the land were suffering, [Joel 1:17-18](#), and so Joel cries out to the Lord for some kind of break from it all, [Joel 1:19](#).

The fire had destroyed the land and the trees, [Joel 1:19](#), and so in a sense, God had brought them to their knees. Even the wild animals panted for God, [Joel 1:20](#) / [Psalm 42:1](#), because there was no water.

Benson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Even the cattle and wild beasts utter their complaints, and express their want of food by the mournful noise which they make, as it were beseeching thee to have pity on them and relieve their wants. Even they have a voice to cry, as well as an eye to look to God. The drought drying up the springs, the rivers have failed, and have little or no water in them.’

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Fire and flame are the terms used by the prophet to denote the burning heat of the drought, which consumes the meadows and even scorches the trees. This is very obvious from the drying up of the water brooks.’

APPLICATION

We often wonder what it will take to bring people to their knees, never mind a nation. For Judah, it was going to take a plague of locusts and a drought to bring them to repentance.

The locust plague had already happened, and now they’re in the midst of a drought. Joel uses the past plague and the current drought as lessons to let them know that God is trying to get their attention and they need to repent of their disobedience.

We see many people finally turning to the Lord when life gets tough, usually through bad decisions or difficult circumstances. The problem comes when we forget our past and what the Lord has done for us.

Maybe it’s not a bad thing to speak about how God finally brought us to our knees, to our children and grandchildren, maybe through our past experiences we can help them to recognise when God is trying to get their attention, maybe we can teach them to learn from our past mistakes, [Romans 15:4](#) / [1 Corinthians 10:11-12](#).

CHAPTER 2

‘Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains, a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them, the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots, they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defences without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves, they enter through the windows. Before them, the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?’ Joel 2:1-11

AN ARMY OF LOCUSTS

Remember the locust plague of Joel 1 was past, Joel 1:4, but the attack described in this chapter, Joel 2:1-11, was going to happen in the future. The day of the Lord is coming, it is close, it is at hand, Joel 2:1.

Joel describes the coming of the Lord as a recurrence of the locust plague; he tells us that the locust plague is actually an invading army, led by God as He comes in judgment against His people, Isaiah 2:12 / Amos 5:18.

THE TRUMPET

The prophet ordered a trumpet to be blown in Zion, Joel 2:1, that is Jerusalem, specifically on the temple mount, to sound an alarm, Jeremiah 4:5-6 / Ezekiel 33:2-6.

The trumpet was blown for four reasons.

1. A warning.
2. To call people together.
3. To get the people to move as a body.
4. To proclaim rejoicing.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The trumpet was accustomed to sound in Zion, only for religious uses; to call together the congregations for holy meetings, to usher in the beginnings of their months and their solemn days with festival gladness. Now in Zion itself, the stronghold of the kingdom, the Holy City, the place which God chose to put His Name there, which He had promised to establish, the trumpet was to be used only for sounds of alarm and fear. Alarm could not penetrate there without having pervaded the whole land. With it, the whole human hope of Judah was gone.’

THE LOCUSTS

The trumpet is to be blown as a warning; the locusts are coming, and they will be a destructive force. Locusts never fought over food; they were disciplined, hence this is a very well-trained army. This army is going to be God’s army, and they were brutal and the fiercest of all.

The army is so great and powerful that the people of the land would tremble, Joel 2:1. Things were going to be bad. The locusts were so numerous that the sky turned dark, Joel 2:2.

Joel is telling them that the land is going to be totally destroyed by the locusts, just like a fire sweeps through a forest, nothing will be left, Joel 2:3. Nothing will escape the advancing judgment, Exodus 10:5 / Exodus 10:10-15.

Constable says the following, concerning Joel 2:4-5.

‘Joel compared this advancing army to warhorses and chariots, the war machines of his day. He heard the familiar sound of chariots in battle, which he likened to the crackling of fire as it rages up a mountainside, swiftly consuming everything in its path. The huge army that Joel saw appeared unstoppable. It is interesting that locusts look like tiny armoured horses, and they behave like them as well, Job 39:19-20 / Revelation 9:7.’

It’s not surprising that the people in and around Jerusalem were going to turn pale in fear, Joel 2:6 / Isaiah 26:17 / Jeremiah 4:31 / Micah 4:10. This horrific army would climb the city walls and enter into every house, Joel 2:7-9 / Exodus 10:5-6.

This army is so vast, not only does the earth tremble, but so do the heavens, Joel 2:10. The sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine, which is judgment talk, Joel 3:16 / Judges 5:4 / Psalms 18:7 / Psalms 77:18 / Isaiah 13:10 / Isaiah 13:13 / Ezekiel 32:7 / Zechariah 14:6-7.

The people needed to know that this locust plague was sent from God, Joel 2:11, after all, He commands them. It's the day of the Lord, which no one will be able to endure, Joel 2:11 / Amos 5:18. If the people didn't repent, then this huge army would come later to destroy them.

REND YOUR HEART

'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare your people, LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' Joel 2:12-17

God Himself speaks here and elaborates on the fact that if the people repent, they will receive mercy, Joel 2:12 / 2 Chronicles 7:14. Because every aspect concerning repentance is mentioned here, 'fasting, weeping and mourning', Joel 2:12, make no mistake about it, He is looking for true repentance, Psalm 51:17 / 2 Corinthians 7:10. Notice how the people were to render their hearts, not their garments, Joel 2:13. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Merely external worship and hypocritical pretensions will only increase the evil, and cause God to meet you with heavier judgments.'

If they repent, then God would truly bless them, Joel 2:13-14 / Exodus 34:6-7 / Psalms 86:15 / Psalms 103:8. They would be able to once again offer grain and drink offerings, Joel 1:9 / Joel 1:13.

Blowing the trumpet here in Joel 2:15 was for the reason of bringing the people together; this was to be repentance on a national scale. Because all the elders, children and priests were to come together, Joel 2:16-17, this tells us the scale of their sin; everyone was involved, everyone was guilty. Everyone needed to repent and turn to God.

We can imagine the nations surrounding Palestine thinking to themselves, 'the God of Israel was no different from any of their gods,' Joel 2:17, hence the reason God's people needed to repent so that God could bring them some kind of relief to them and show the nations around that He isn't like their gods.

THE LORD'S ANSWER

'Then the LORD was jealous for his land and took pity on his people. The LORD replied to them: 'I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations. 'I will drive the northern horde far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land; its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise.'

Surely, he has done great things! Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things! Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring

rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. ‘I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.’ Joel 2:18-27

Dyer says the following.

‘Beginning in Joel 2:18, Israel ceases to be the object of God’s judgment and becomes instead the object of His blessing. In a similar reversal, the hordes (locust and human) cease to be the instruments of God’s judgment on Israel and become instead the objects of God’s judgment. This reversal was originally foretold by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-9.’

Some commentators suggest that Judah had repented at this time.

Deere, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Evidently, the people responded to the prophet’s invitation. The solemn convocation was convened; the people repented, and the Lord forgave them. Consequently, he now promises to remove the locusts and restore the prosperity of the land. Now all will know that God Himself dwells with his people.’

The argument against this is seen in that verse, Joel 2:18. Notice, it does not say that the people responded in repentance. It does not say that God saw their repentance and decided to have compassion on His people. Rather, Joel 2:18 tells us that the Lord has a heart for His people. The Lord became jealous for His land and had compassion on His people.

Notice that Joel 2:18 begins with the word ‘then,’ and remember also, there are no chapter breaks in the original text. If we were to read Joel 2:27 and Joel 2:18 together, it makes more sense. If they repented of their sins, ‘then’ God would bless them.

God is going to restore all that the locusts had eaten, that is, the grain, wine, and oil, Joel 1:10. The people would then enjoy plenty of these products in the future, Deuteronomy 6:10-11 / Deuteronomy 8:7-10 / Deuteronomy 11:13-15.

Notice the army is from the north, Joel 2:20; both Assyria and Babylon attacked Israel from the north, Jeremiah 1:14-15 / Jeremiah 4:6 / Jeremiah 6:1 / Jeremiah 10:22 / Zephaniah 2:13.

First were the Assyrians, who uprooted the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., carrying them off into captivity, 2 Kings 17:1-41. Second was the collapse of the southern kingdom of Judah during the Babylonian captivity of 586 B. C. Nebuchadnezzar reduced Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple to rubble, 2 Kings 25:1-30. Judah was taken back to Babylon for the seventy-year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah, Jeremiah 25:11.

Here God speaks of immediate, temporal and future blessings. All their possessions, which were taken away, would be replaced, rain would come again, and produce would be grown; this is the restoration of the land and the people.

They would have no doubts that God was behind these blessings, Joel 2:19-27.

Remember that the plague and the drought had gone on for some time, and so, God promises, if they continue to repent, they would be fine, but if they turned their backs on God again, they would need to watch out, trouble would come.

This ends the first part of Joel’s prophecy, and it’s clearly related to the people of his day. The rest of the book looks forward to a period described as ‘afterward’, Joel 2:28, ‘in those days and at that time’, Joel 3:1, and ‘in that day’, Joel 3:18.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.’ Joel 2:28-32

Gifford, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joel 2:28-32 contain prophecy of the beginning of the church, the Christian dispensation. Joel 3:1-16 seems to contain prophecy of the return of the Jews from captivity long before Jesus came to earth, long before the former prophecy was fulfilled. How do we explain Joel’s jumping forth to one scene and then going back to a much earlier one? In Joel 3:1-16, God is promising that the captivity would end, but in Joel 2:28-32, He is telling the people of an even greater blessing, a time of release from spiritual captivity to Satan. Thus, He starts with the greater blessing.’ God promises future blessings, He encourages them to repent and tells them He will personally be with them individually. Notice that Joel mentions sons, daughters, old men and young men; this is used to tell us that there’s no special class of people upon whom God’s Spirit will be poured out, like what happened with the Old Testament prophets and kings, 2 Kings 24:2 / Hebrews 1:1.

Notice also the miraculous aspect of God pouring out His Spirit. First of all, we find prophecy. A ‘prophet’ was one who ‘spoke forth’ for God. A ‘prophecy’ was the message ‘spoken forth’ by the servant of God who spoke as he was given words to speak by the Spirit of God, and ‘prophesy’ denotes the act of speaking for God. All of these words cover both delivering the message of God, that is, preaching and teaching God’s Word.

Remember the daughters of Philip, Acts 21:9, we should understand that they were enabled to speak on God’s behalf. They had been granted the gift of prophecy, and we shouldn’t be surprised at this, because, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter reminded his hearers that Joel had spoken of the coming of a time, Joel 2:28 / Acts 2:17.

We know that people had visions in the New Testament, but dreams are not so common, except for Joseph, a Jew, Matthew 2:19-23, and Pilate’s wife, a Gentile, Matthew 27:19. More importantly, there’s nothing in the New Testament which indicates that Christians today would have dreams and visions, Hebrews 1:1-2.

Prophets, kings and priests would usually have God’s Spirit, Numbers 11:16-30, but God says He would do this for everybody, Joel 2:29. Yes, this is for the Jews, but it’s also a future prophecy, concerning every generation. This promise is for everyone who would accept God on His terms.

The day of the Lord had been postponed in 840 B.C. until later, when two things would happen.

1. God’s Spirit would be poured out, Joel 2:28-29.
2. The day of the Lord would happen, Joel 2:31.

Joel continues about the prophecy of what God would do in the last days. The wonders describe the end of the Jewish nation, Joel 2:30-31. When God speaks of ‘the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood’ is figurative language which God uses to describe the judgement and end of an earthly nation, Isaiah 13:9-10 / Isaiah 34:4 / Malachi 4:1 / Malachi 4:5-6.

When the Jews heard this language, they wouldn’t be thinking of the end of the world, as some believe today, they would be thinking, ‘which nation is God judging now!’

The sun usually referred to the king of the nation, and the moon and stars referred to the governors, generals and captains who received their power from the king. Joel here is speaking about the nation of Israel. Israel as a nation would come to an end. And when was this going to happen?

When the outpouring of the Spirit happens in the last days, Acts 2:17 / Galatians 3:26-29. Notice that Joel says that this will be ‘the great and dreadful day of the Lord’, Joel 2:31.

Although this would be a great and wonderful day for believers, it would certainly be a really sad day for those who refuse to believe. For them, this day would be the day of judgment for all those who wouldn't accept the results of the outpouring of the Spirit.

In light of Peter's use of this passage, **Acts 2:17-21**, in terms of deliverance, the main meaning of it is applicable to salvation from sin, with the related indication that just a few, a 'remnant', will actually participate in this salvation. In the wider meaning of the prophecy, 'mount Zion and Jerusalem', **Joel 2:32**, stand for the church or kingdom of Jesus Christ, which began there, **Acts 2:41 / Acts 2:47**. In the spiritual sense, it's still true that 'The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem,' **Isaiah 2:3**.

THE LAST DAYS

There is so much going on in the 'religious world' concerning the 'last days', people are looking for signs and wonders to prove we're in the last days, they say 'there are wars, and there are terrors, which all point to the end of the world.'

The Bible actually teaches us very clearly concerning 'the last days'. Jesus has spoken to us in these last days, **Hebrews 1:1-2**. The Hebrew writer uses the word 'but' and he uses that word to emphasise the contrast between how God spoke and revealed His Word to mankind in the past and how He revealed His complete and final revelation in Jesus, **Hebrews 1:2**, which is obviously a Messianic reference.

We've been living in the last days ever since the arrival of Jesus. The last days are the days of the Messiah, not the end of the world. Several centuries before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel, **Joel 2:28-29**, foretold that the Spirit of God would be 'poured out' in the 'last days'.

When Peter preached the first Gospel message to the Jews in **Acts 2:17**, he quotes from **Joel 2** and notice how he describes the days in which they were living at that point in time. He describes them at 'that point in time' as living in 'the last days', **Acts 2:17**.

Countless sermons have been preached, thousands of books have been sold, which all try to tell us that certain things are happening in the world today, and they tell us these are all 'signs' that Jesus is about to return. And so, they go out on the streets preaching, and they have these posters which say, 'The end is near, we're in the last days.'

Look at what Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy, 'There will be terrible times in the last days', **2 Timothy 3:1**. And then Paul lists a whole bunch of non-Christ like attitudes, but look at what he tells Timothy later, 'Have nothing to do with such people,' **2 Timothy 3:5**.

This is present tense and has nothing to do with those people who were around at that time. That in itself tells us that Timothy was living in 'the last days'. When Peter is talking about the Christ, he says, 'He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake,' **1 Peter 1:20**.

Was Jesus around during the time of the Apostle Peter? Of course, He was. Peter understood he was living in the last times. Jesus uses a similar kind of language in **Matthew 24:1-35**.

Remember the disciples have come to Jesus privately to ask Him, 'What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' And so, Jesus is answering their questions.

He uses the words 'those days' throughout this text when He's describing the destruction of Jerusalem, **Matthew 24:19 / Matthew 24:22 / Matthew 24:29**. But when we carry on reading from **Matthew 24:36** through to **Matthew 26:46**, He uses the words 'that day' to describe what will happen at the end of the world, **Matthew 24:36**.

Do you see how His words are more specific? Now, if we were studying the topic of ‘the end of the world’, that’s one of the texts we would go to. But we’re not studying that, we’re studying the topic of ‘the last days’, which isn’t something still to come.

‘The last days’ were then, as the prophets looked forward to the time by speaking of ‘in those days and at that time,’ **Joel 2:29 / Joel 3:1**. If the world continues for another thousand years, we would still be in the last days.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We need to remember the place which the Holy Spirit occupies in God’s plan of salvation, and that we should also recognise that **Acts 2** marks the commencement of the age of His ministry, the age in which we now live and understand the significance of His ministry in God’s plan of salvation.

The Scriptures reveal how the plan of redemption unfolded.

1. The decision to make Man’s salvation possible originated in the mind of God Himself, **1 John 4:9 / 1 John 4:16**.
2. The plan of salvation was put into effect by the Word of God, who ‘appeared at the end of the age to put away sin,’ **Hebrews 9:26 / Galatians 4:4-5 / John 1:1 / John 1:14**.
3. When the redemptive work of Christ had been accomplished, the Holy Spirit came to make the Gospel effective, **John 16:7-11**.

But the Spirit’s ministry couldn’t commence until the Lord Jesus had returned to the Father. This is made clear in **John 7:39**, and in **John 14:26**, where the Lord speaks of ‘the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name’. We see, then, that each member of the Godhead, that is, God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, or the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are all involved in our redemption.

And today, wherever and whenever the Gospel is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit will seek to produce conviction in the hearts of men and women, on the three important matters stated by the Lord Jesus Himself in the last passage mentioned, because the Gospel Age is the Age of the Spirit’s ministry.

The prophet Joel, therefore, was predicting the coming of a time when those individuals who received the forgiveness of their sins through faith in, and obedience to, the Christ, would also be granted God’s ‘dorea’, His ‘free’ or ‘extra’ gift of the Holy Spirit, as an ‘indwelling presence’, enabling them to become the people He intends them to become.

It’s to this coming of the Holy Spirit that Peter referred to on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2:38**. In explaining how he and his fellow apostles were able to speak in languages they had never learned, Peter said, ‘This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,’ **Acts 2:17**.

What did Joel and Peter mean by ‘poured out on all flesh’?

1. He did NOT mean that ‘all flesh’ would receive the ‘measure’ of the Spirit then being demonstrated by the apostles, **Acts 2:1-4**.

In **John 3:34**, we find the word ‘measure’, which is from the word ‘metron’, and it means ‘capacity’. The apostles ‘baptism in the Spirit’ was something uniquely promised to them by the Lord Jesus Himself, and it was given in order to equip them to undertake an equally unique responsibility as His ‘witnesses’, **Acts 1:8**.

Their baptism, their ‘overwhelming’ in the Spirit, would do the following.

- a. Guide them into all truth, **John 16:13**.
- b. Give them total recall of all the things Jesus had taught them, **John 14:26**.
- c. Reveal to them new truths, **John 14:13 / John 14:26**.

d. 'Clothe' them with power, Luke 24:49.

Such promises were never made to anyone else in all of biblical history, and regardless of what some denominations may claim, no one today receives the 'baptism of the Spirit'.

2. Peter meant that ALL who accepted Jesus as the Christ and submitted to Him in obedience would also receive God's gift of the Spirit, Acts 5:32.

This means that the Holy Spirit is God's own gift, Acts 2:38. It doesn't relate to a gift from the Holy Spirit, nor does it relate to the 'gifts of the Spirit', the 'charismata', or miraculous 'grace gifts', about which Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

That God's gift of the Spirit is available to all is clear from the fact that Peter said the promise was made 'to you and your children', the Jews to whom he was then speaking 'and to all who are afar off,' Acts 2:38-39, the non-Jews, or Gentiles, Ephesians 2:17. In Acts 5:32, he further states that God gives this gift 'to those who obey Him'.

3. This 'free' or 'extra gift' is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He 'dwells in you', 1 Corinthians 3:16, so that 'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have (received) from God', 1 Corinthians 6:19. Furthermore, 'you are in the Spirit if, in fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him,' Romans 8:9.

SUMMARY

ALL obedient believers receive the 'Gift of the Spirit', Acts 2:38, that is, the Holy Spirit is GOD'S own gift, Romans 8:11. This is 'the Spirit who dwells in you,' 1 Corinthians 3:16 / 1 Corinthians 6:19.

The miraculous gifts were gifts which the Holy Spirit Himself bestowed on certain individuals, and, according to 1 Corinthians 12:11, the Spirit's gifts are given 'as He chooses', or 'as He wills', and were not given to everyone. This question, 'Do all speak in tongues?', is clearly implied by Paul in his rhetorical questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. The purpose of the miraculous gifts was to establish the truth and build up the church, Romans 1:11. He was writing about a 'measure' of the Spirit beyond the usual 'gift of the Spirit', which these Roman Christians had already received when they were baptised into Christ, Romans 6:1-8.

These spiritual gifts were bestowed on believers by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, Romans 1:11. Read also, Paul to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 1:6, and notice, 'by the laying on of my hands'.

Only the apostles had the power to lay hands, to impart spiritual gifts. In Acts 8, we read that Philip went to Samaria to preach the Gospel, Acts 8:4-8. There he displayed miraculous power, performing 'signs and wonders' which endorsed his preaching of the Gospel.

The Samaritans believed and were baptised, Acts 8:12. The apostles in Jerusalem heard of their conversion and 'sent down Peter and John', Acts 8:14, who laid hands on the converts. Peter himself stated that baptism into Christ brings 'the gift of the Holy Spirit', Acts 2:38.

Since the Samaritans had already been baptised into Christ, this imposition of the hands of the apostles was an additional blessing and was followed by a demonstration of gifts of the Spirit, which Simon must have witnessed, and which impressed him so powerfully that he offered to buy 'this power', Acts 8:18-19.

Acts 6:6 records that Philip, the evangelist, had already received the laying on of apostolic hands. Yet, although he performed acts of power in Samaria, he was not able to do what the apostles did. He couldn't pass on the spiritual gifts to others. Had he been able to do so, the visit of the apostles, Peter and John, would have been unnecessary. This surely means that the age of miraculous spiritual gifts was limited to the lifetime of the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands, and it ended with their deaths.

It's a shame that many seek the 'gifts' but not the 'Gift'. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is God's Gift, Acts 2:38, but a gift is only a gift when it is accepted. And the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus as the Holy Guest, but He will not enter uninvited!

APPLICATION

God really wants to bless us, but we must be willing to repent when He commands us to, Luke 13:5 / Acts 2:38.

Repentance simply means to reconsider our ways and then change the direction of our lives and start following God and His ways.

There's always the temptation to read too much into any text and make it mean something it was never meant to mean. Joel 2 is one of those chapters where people make it mean something it was never meant to mean. All kinds of doctrines have come from this text, especially when it comes to God's Spirit being poured out and the miraculous gifts.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

'In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There, I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine to drink.' Joel 3:1-3

THE NATIONS JUDGED

As we go through this chapter, we find figurative language being used and many different views about what the days and time Joel is speaking about. Is he speaking about the time of Judah when they return from captivity, and God will judge their enemies? Or is he speaking about a future time, a time in the New Testament and beyond? Or is he speaking about both?

Although these verses may imply or even hint at things that will happen in New Testament times, we must bear in mind what these words meant for Judah and their enemies during those days and times.

Kelly, in his commentary, says the following.

'Now we find in the New Testament that there may be a passing application included within the scope of a prophecy, but also an ultimate and therefore more complete fulfilment. They are, of course, both true. It is a mistake to deny the imminent and lesser application; it is still more grossly erroneous not to look for more.'

Many commentators have different views concerning the time of 'those days', Joel 3:1. Some suggest it's speaking of the New Testament time, and others suggest it applies to the time when God's people returned from captivity.

Gifford, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joel 2:28-32 contain prophecy of the beginning of the church, the Christian dispensation. Joel 3:1-16 seems to contain prophecy of the return of the Jews from captivity long before Jesus came to earth, long before the former prophecy was fulfilled. How do we explain Joel’s jumping forth to one scene and then going back to a much earlier one? In Joel 3:1-16 God is promising that the captivity would end, but in Joel 2:28-32, He is telling the people of an even greater blessing, a time of release from spiritual captivity to Satan. Thus, He starts with the greater blessing.’ God will judge all nations on account of His people, especially Judah’s enemies, Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt and Edom, Amos 1:6 / Amos 1:9 / Isaiah 9:12 / Isaiah 14:28-32 / 2 Chronicles 21:16-17.

Some commentators suggest that the gathering of the nations, Joel 3:2, is a reference to the gathering of spiritual Israel out of all nations through the preaching of the Gospel, Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:15-16 / Acts 8:4.

The place where Jehoshaphat defeated the nations of Moab and Ammon is recorded in 2 Chronicles 20, but the reference to ‘The Valley of Jehoshaphat’, Joel 3:2, isn’t a literal place in Palestine but a figurative place where God will bring His judgment.

It points more to an event, not an actual location, kind of like the place ‘Armageddon’ in Revelation 16. The Valley of Jehoshaphat, which means ‘God shall judge’ and ‘Armageddon’ are the places where God will vent His anger and wrath upon all those who oppose Him.

When the Israelites were taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, their captors showed little consideration for the people. ‘They cast lots for my people’, Joel 3:3 / Nahum 3:10, refers to the sinfulness of Israel’s enemies, drunkenness, and human slavery, especially child abuse, which are prominent here.

‘Now what have you against me, Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland. ‘See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away.’ The LORD has spoken.’
Joel 3:4-8

God is going to bring judgment upon Tyre, Sidon and Philistia, Ezekiel 26:1-28:19 / Ezekiel 28:20-26 / Isaiah 23-29 / Isaiah 14:28-30 / Jeremiah 47 / Ezekiel 25:15-17, because they had mistreated God’s people, and they will reap what they sow, Galatians 6:7. They will be treated as they treated others around them, especially God’s people.

They stole the temple treasures of Israel and placed them in their pagan temples of false gods, Hosea 2:8 / Haggai 2:8.

They traded in slavery by selling Israelites to other nations, Amos 1:6 / Amos 1:9 / Ezekiel 27:13 / Ezekiel 27:19.

God will sell His enemies’ sons and daughters to Judah, and then Judah will sell their enemies’ sons and daughters to the Sabeans, a nation far away. The Sabeans were an old group of people who were mentioned in Job 1:15 and described as a people of stature in Isaiah 45:14.

Later, the very people to whom they had sold God’s people, the Greeks, would eventually be the people who would conquer and sell them as slaves to other nations. They eventually reaped what they sowed when Alexander the Great conquered their cities.

‘Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, ‘I am strong!’ Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, LORD! ‘Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!’ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a

stronghold for the people of Israel. ‘Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.’ Joel 3:9-17

The nations, Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, are called to prepare for battle; they are called to come to the ‘Valley of Jehoshaphat’, [Joel 3:2](#) / [Joel 3:12](#), where the Lord will judge the nations.

This again speaks of judgement on Judah’s enemies. God will overthrow these people, and He will use the judgment of these people in reference to any people who come up against Judah.

God says to His enemies, ‘beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears,’ [Joel 3:10](#).

In [Isaiah 2:1-4](#), and [Micah 4:1-3](#), we find similar figurative language used.

[Micah 4:3](#) and [Isaiah 2:4](#) both read, ‘they will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.’ But here in [Joel 3:10](#), ‘beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears’. In Micah and Isaiah, the weapons are made into farming implements, but in Joel, the farming implements are made into weapons. The point is that when Micah and Isaiah speak, they both speak in terms of peace, which will come in the future, hence why the weapons are made into farming implements. But here in Joel, there will be no peace for God’s enemies because they are about to be judged, hence why the farming implements are made into weapons.

The word ‘warriors’, [Joel 3:11](#), means mighty ones; this could be either angels, [Daniel 9:20-23](#) / [Matthew 13:39](#) / [Revelation 14:14-20](#), or cherubim, [Ezekiel 10](#). Whoever they are, they are God’s chosen fighters. God’s enemies will have no chance.

Joel mentioned that the harvest is ripe, [Joel 3:13](#). This is in reference to coming judgment, where they would reap as he had sown, [Galatians 6:7-8](#) / [Matthew 13:24-30](#).

Notice that Joel calls the place the ‘valley of decision’, [Joel 3:14](#), which simply means the valley of judgment. In other words, the nations were called by God to judgment. Once again, this is not to be taken literally as a place, but figuratively as an event.

The nations were so evil that God now decides to judge them and destroy them, [Joel 3:15-16](#), which meant God’s people would be free from them. This is a picture of God’s kingdom standing and the earthly kingdoms falling.

As we noted earlier, the mention of the sun and the moon being darkened is figurative judgment talk, [Joel 3:16](#) / [Judges 5:4](#) / [Psalms 18:7](#) / [Psalms 77:18](#) / [Isaiah 13:10](#) / [Isaiah 13:13](#) / [Ezekiel 32:7](#) / [Zechariah 14:6-7](#) / [Mark 13:23](#) / [Matthew 24:29](#), which symbolises the end of the kings and rulers of the nations, [Hebrews 12:22-29](#). In other words, there are going to be big changes.

God is described as roaring like a lion towards His enemies, [Joel 2:11](#) / [Jeremiah 25:30](#) / [Amos 1:2](#). But at the same time, He speaks of hope and strength to His own people, [Joel 3:16](#).

When God carried out His judgment on the nations, the promise was that no conquering strangers would pass through Jerusalem again. Because of the judgments which God is bringing upon the nations, His people will know that He will once again dwell in Jerusalem with them, and no one will invade Jerusalem again.

BLESSINGS FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

‘In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD’s house and will water the valley of acacias. But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations. Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.’ The LORD dwells in Zion!’ Joel 3:18-21

Joel began the chapter by referring to what would happen ‘in those days and at that time’, [Joel 1:1](#). That is, the days and time when God would bring Judah back from exile and the judgment which will follow all those nations who abused God’s people.

Here in [Joel 3:18-21](#), we read about what will happen when they do return from captivity, Ezra / Nehemiah. ‘In that day,’ the blessings will be abundant, there will be blessings of security, and there will be a future for God’s people. Judah shall be blessed by a ‘fountain, from the house of the Lord,’ [Ezekiel 47:1-23](#), even the ‘valley of acacias’, ‘Shittim,’ [Numbers 33:49](#) / [Joshua 3:1](#), which was a very dry place, would be blessed, [Joel 3:18](#).

Gifford, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jerusalem was the centre of worship under the old covenant, but in the Christian age, Jerusalem is not the centre of worship, [John 4:21](#). So these words of Joel do not have reference to something in this age.’

Notice how [Joel 3:17](#) and [Joel 3:21](#) speak of God dwelling in Zion. Some commentators suggest that [Joel 3:17](#) and [Joel 3:21](#) are speaking of the new Jerusalem, and spiritual city of God, the church, that descended from heaven, [Hebrews 12:22](#) / [Revelation 3:12](#) / [Revelation 14:1](#) / [Revelation 21:2](#) / [Revelation 21:10](#). In other words, no stranger, unbeliever, would pass through the church because God dwells within His church.

However, Kelly, in his commentary, says the following.

‘At the judgment of the dead, Jehovah will not roar as here out of Zion, neither will He dwell there, making Jerusalem holiness. For earth and heaven will have fled away, [Revelation 20:11](#). The absolutely new creation follows for eternity in [Revelation 21:1-5](#). But here the picture is so different as necessarily to suppose a time wholly distinct. It is the earthly Jerusalem, not the heavenly; it is not the Lord’s shout calling His own to meet Him in the air, but His lion-like roar against His enemies on earth. It is His dwelling in Zion, His holy mountain, so as to make the holiness of Jerusalem no longer a mockery but a blessed reality. It is not yet the hour when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and the works that are therein being burned up.’ We should note the words ‘never again will foreigners invade her’, used in [Joel 3:18](#). Those words ‘never again’ simply imply that if it happens again, it won’t happen in the same way.

Egypt and Edom, [Joel 3:19](#), who symbolise God’s enemies, will be desolate because of their violence, [Obadiah 10-14](#) / [Ezekiel 25:12](#) / [Ezekiel 35:15](#) / [Ezekiel 36:5](#) / [Lamentations 4:22](#) / [Psalms 137:7](#) / [Amos 1:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Joel 3:21](#).

‘The word rendered ‘cleansed’, KJV, is not used of natural cleansing, nor is the image taken from the cleansing of the body. The word signifies only to pronounce innocent, or to free from guilt. Nor is ‘blood’ used of sinfulness generally, but only of the actual guilt of shedding blood.’

Judah and Jerusalem shall abide forever, acquitted of their guilt, [Joel 3:20-21](#). God won’t free the wicked but bring just judgment on them for the harm that they brought on His people.

Gifford, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Judah would dwell intact throughout that particular age, the Mosaic age, but when the Christian age began, they would no longer be God’s people nor would Jerusalem be the centre of worship.’

Constable says the following.

‘God’s final promise through Joel was that He would avenge the blood shed by these enemies of Israel, which He had not yet avenged in the prophet’s day. He promised to do this because He dwelt in Zion, that is, He had a special covenant relationship with Israel, [Ezekiel 43:1-12](#) / [Zechariah 2:10-13](#).’

APPLICATION

When difficult times come into our lives, they can actually be a blessing if they turn us back to God, Amos 4:6-12 / Job 1:20-22. God sees all, the good and the bad. He sees those who oppose Him and His people and promises they will be judged.

He also promises that repentance is available to all, but if people don't repent, then they will be judged, 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 / Joel 2:13. Israel was chosen in 586 B.C., but in A.D. 70, they were punished because they didn't change their ways.

We must remember that 'The Day of the Lord' is coming for us all, 2 Peter 3:7-10, after which there will be no more chances to repent, and so we must prepare now, 2 Peter 3:11-14.

The good news is that God doesn't want anyone to perish because He loves us too much, and the reason He hasn't returned yet is that He's giving people time to come to Him, 2 Peter 3:9.