

Commentary Studies in Joel

CHAPTER 1

1. THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME TO JOEL (The book announces itself as inspired of God) THE SON OF PETHUEL, (Many of the prophets inform us as to who was reigning in Israel and/or Judah at the time of their prophesying. Joel does not, and as a result commentators have varied widely as to just when they suppose he prophesied. Most of the prophets tell us in their opening verses as to whom they prophesied. Joel bypasses this in his opening verses, but later references in the book cause us to list him with those prophets to the southern kingdom.)

2. HEAR THIS, (Something important is to be announced) YE OLD MEN, (The traditional ones given to reminiscing) AND GIVE EAR, ALL YE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND, (The announcement would affect them all,) HATH THIS BEEN IN YOUR DAYS, OR EVEN IN THE DAYS OF YOUR FATHERS? (This that was to come to pass, have you old men seen the like in your lifetimes? or did your fathers ever tell you of having seen such days? Obviously this which Joel was to announce would be something far greater than they had ever experienced or even heard of.)

3. TELL YE YOUR CHILDREN OF IT, (It would be something to talk about,) AND LET YOUR CHILDREN TELL THEIR CHILDREN, (It would be so great that their children would be narrating it to the grandchildren,) AND THEIR CHILDREN ANOTHER GENERATION, (It would become a tradition among the coming generations. What was it to be, Joel?)

4. THAT WHICH THE PALMERWORM HATH LEFT HATH THE LOCUST EATEN; AND THAT WHICH THE LOCUST HATH LEFT HATH THE CANKERWORM EATEN; AND THAT WHICH THE CANKERWORM HATH LEFT HATH THE CATERPILLAR EATEN, (It was to be one of those things most feared by the inhabitants of Palestine—a plague of crop-destroying pests—and this one would be the worst

ever experienced. Apparently the times of Joel were wicked times, for the Lord used such means to punish His people: Deut. 28:15,38,39,42 and II Chron. 6:28-31. Your writer is one who believes that God is still the author of drouths and pestilences, and when such come to vex and harass our land, the reason is apparent. An eastern traveler describes a devastating locust plague which he witnessed in Palestine as follows: "Those which I saw were much bigger than our common grasshoppers, and had brown spotted wings, with legs and bodies of a bright yellow. Their first appearance was toward the latter end of March, the wind having been some time from the south. In the middle of April their numbers were so vastly increased that in the heat of the day they formed themselves into large and numerous swarms, flew in the air like a succession of clouds, and, as the prophet Joel expresses it, 'the sun... shall be dark'... In the month of May, when the ovaries of these insects were ripe and turgid, each of these swarms began gradually to disappear, and retired into the Metijiah and other adjacent plains, where they deposited their eggs. These were no sooner hatched, in June, than each of the broods collected itself into a compact body of an eighth of a mile square, and, marching afterward directly forward toward the sea, they let nothing escape them, eating up everything that was green and juicy, not only the lesser kinds of vegetables, but 'the vine' likewise, 'the fig tree, ...the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field.'" Thus we can see why the Palestinians feared such plagues. We have on file pictures from "Grit" and "Life" magazines of locust plagues in Palestine in recent times. They remind us of those lean, depression years of the thirties in this country, which were bad enough, but those of Palestine are worse, and the one that Joel was announcing was to be king of them all. How helpless man is before a God who has such fearful means at His disposal!)

5. AWAKE, YE DRUNKARDS, AND WEEP; AND HOWL, ALL YE DRINKERS OF WINE, BECAUSE OF THE NEW WINE; FOR IT IS CUT OFF FROM YOUR MOUTH. (Having been blessed with abundant harvests, they had perverted their rightful use into that which God condemned—drunkenness. Now He will show His displeasure with their actions, and they will feel it keenly. How they would weep and howl who had been given to drunkenness when they could not obtain their booze! When God visits men with judgment, "weep" and "howl" characterize them, Jas. 5:1; Matt. 8:12;

and others. We would do well to remember this and so please God that we not have to experience His wrathful visitation.)

6. FOR A NATION IS COME UP UPON MY LAND, (He calls them a "nation" in this verse and an "army" in 2:25. From what Joel goes on to say, it is evident that he is still talking about the beetle pests.) STRONG, (Yes, too strong for man to cope with. We personally recall the futile attempts made in the unforgettable summers of the thirties to combat the chinch bugs that ruined our crops. That eastern traveler writes of Palestine's futile efforts to combat the oncoming locusts: "The inhabitants, to stop their progress, made a variety of pits and trenches all over their fields and gardens, which they filled with water, or else they heaped up therein heath, stubble, and such-like combustible matter, which were severally set on fire upon the approach of the locusts. But this was all to no purpose, for the trenches were quickly filled up and the fires extinguished by infinite swarms succeeding one another, whilst the front was regardless of danger and the rear pressed on so close that a retreat was altogether impossible. A day or two after one of these broods was in motion others were already hatched to march and glean after them, gnawing off the very bark and the young branches of such trees as had before escaped with the loss only of their fruit and foliage.") AND WITHOUT NUMBER, (The grasshoppers were so thick in the depression years in this country that the radio announced that the gloominess prevailing was due to clouds of grasshoppers between us and the sun. Chinch bugs were so numerous that it looked like the dust underfoot was alive.) WHOSE TEETH (Their weapons,) ARE THE TEETH OF A LION, (Famous for devouring,) AND HE HATH THE CHEEK-TEETH OF A GREAT LION.

7. HE HATH LAID MY VINE WASTE, (The grape was one of Palestine's chief crops. The crop was not only ruined, but the vines were ruined. They would feel the effects of this for many years as it takes a good while to get a new vineyard into production,) AND BARKED MY FIG TREE: (The fig was another important crop. "Barking" the fig trees would kill them. This, too, would be felt for years to come.) HE HATH MADE IT CLEAN BARE, AND CAST IT AWAY; THE BRANCHES THEREOF ARE MADE WHITE, (The way a tree looks that has been barked. It is hard for us to imagine how pathetic the land looked when these

devouring insects did their work. Van Lennep says, "The ground over which the devastating hordes of locusts have passed at once assumes an appearance of sterility and dearth. Well did the Romans call them 'the burners of the land', which is the literal meaning of our word 'locust'.")

8. LAMENT LIKE A VIRGIN GIRDED WITH SACK-CLOTH FOR THE HUSBAND OF HER YOUTH, (Their sorrow would be like the keenly felt sorrow of a young lady whose husband has been taken from her by death. Sackcloth was worn by the ancients instead of their customary attire when smitten with grief.)

9. THE MEAT-OFFERING (the American Standard gives "meal-offering" instead. The ingredients in the offering show it to have been "meal" instead of "meat" as we think of it: Lev. 2:1 and 6:14,15,20,21.) AND THE DRINK-OFFERING IS CUT OFF FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD; (The drink offering consisted of a measure of wine; Exo. 29:40. The morning and evening sacrifices were accompanied by these two offerings: Exo. 29:38-41. These offerings would be cut off from the temple because there would be nothing to offer.) THE PRIESTS, THE LORD'S MINISTERS, MOURN. (Since there would be nothing to offer, they would mourn. But, they would also mourn because they would have nothing to live on as they depended upon what was presented to God by the people for their living.)

10. THE FIELD IS WASTED, THE LAND MOURNETH: (The fields where their grains grew and where their livestock grazed would also be affected.) FOR THE CORN IS WASTE: (Maize, which we call "corn", is not meant here as maize was not known in Palestine. A look at the dictionary shows our English word "corn" to mean "any small, hard seed; especially the seed of any one of the cereal grasses; collectively, the seeds of any of the cereal grasses used for food; grain. Corn is often specifically used for the important cereal crop of a given region; thus, in England it refers to wheat, in Scotland and Ireland to oats, and in the United States, Canada, and Australia to Indian corn, or maize." Wheat and barley were the most common grains in Palestine.) THE NEW WINE IS DRIED UP, THE OIL LANGUISHETH. (By "oil" is meant the oil of the olive, whose importance is seen in its many uses; in the preparation of food as we use lard

or shortening, in their lamps as fuel, for anointings both common and religious, and for medical purposes. The olive trees would also suffer from what Joel was forecasting.)

11. BE YE ASHAMED, O YE HUSBANDMEN; HOWL, O YE VINE-DRESSERS, FOR THE WHEAT AND THE BARLEY; BECAUSE THE HARVEST OF THE FIELD IS PERISHED. (Not only the drunkards and the priests would mourn, but those who derived their livelihood from agriculture would also be dismayed.)

12. THE VINE IS DRIED UP, THE FIG TREE LANGUISHETH, (These have been mentioned already, but the ones following have not.) THE POMEGRANATE TREE, THE PALM TREE ALSO, (Probably the date palm,) AND THE APPLE TREE, EVEN ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD, ARE WITHERED: (When trees in general would die off, the drouth which accompanied this plague must have been a very serious one.) BECAUSE JOY IS WITHERED AWAY FROM THE SONS OF MEN. (The withering witnessed in vegetable life was reflected in human life. When man does not know where the next meal is coming from, his joy is gone.)

13. GIRD YOURSELVES, AND LAMENT, YE PRIESTS: HOWL, YE MINISTERS OF THE ALTAR; COME, LIE ALL NIGHT IN SACKCLOTH, YE MINISTERS OF MY GOD; FOR THE MEAT-OFFERING AND THE DRINK-OFFERING IS WITHOLDEN FROM THE HOUSE OF YOUR GOD. (The priests, who would also be affected by this coming calamity, were to lead the way in returning to God, whom they had forgotten and for which cause they were being so chastened.)

14. SANCTIFY YE A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, GATHER THE ELDERS AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND CRY UNTO THE LORD. (It would not be hard to get a good prayer meeting crowd out under those conditions.) The priests were not only to cry out to God themselves, but they were to gather the people and the leaders of the people into a solemn assembly and cry out to God in repentance, confession, and prayer that God might be merciful. This would be in keeping with God's promise in II Chron. 7:13,14: "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the

locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." It is easy to forget God when people are prosperous: Deut. 6:10-12 and 32:15. Hos. 13:6 gives us the following order: (a) they were filled; (b) their heart was exalted; and (c) they have forgotten God. But, when shortages are acute and lasting, then men call upon God: Hos. 5:15 and Psa. 78:34.)

15. ALAS FOR THE DAY! FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND, AND AS A DESTRUCTION FROM THE ALMIGHTY SHALL IT COME. (I am constrained to believe that this verse is thrown in parenthetically just to remind them that these conditions would soon be upon them, for he continues in the following verses with the same situation that he has been discussing. It is the prophet himself who exclaims, "Alas for the day!" He believed that such a time was coming, and he realized that it would be a terrible destruction from Almighty God. Those who deliver a message from God usually comprehend more and take to heart more of it than those who do the listening.)

16. IS NOT THE MEAT CUT OFF BEFORE OUR EYES, YEA, JOY AND GLADNESS FROM THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD?

17. THE SEED IS ROTTEN UNDER THEIR CLOUDS, THE GARNERS (Where they normally stored their grain.) ARE LAID DESOLATE, THE BARNs ARE BROKEN DOWN; FOR THE CORN IS WITHERED. (It is hard to realize how bleak and desolate the land was and how unhappy the people were.)

18. HOW DO THE BEASTS GROAN! (The animals had done nothing wrong, but they were feeling the effects of man's sin.) THE HERDS OF CATTLE ARE PERPLEXED, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO PASTURE; (Extreme drouth and such pests as locusts usually accompany each other.) YEA, THE FLOCKS OF SHEEP ARE MADE DESOLATE.

19. O LORD, TO THEE WILL I CRY; (To whom else could one turn in such an hour?) FOR THE FIRE HATH DEVoured THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS, AND THE FLAME HATH BURNED ALL THE TREES OF THE

FIELD, (The drouth and the beetles had consumed everything, leaving everything barren just as if a fire had swept through the land.)

20. THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD CRY ALSO UNTO THEE: FOR THE RIVERS OF WATERS ARE DRIED UP, AND THE FIRE HATH DEVoured THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS. (Their helpless bawlings sounded to the prophet as if they were calling upon God for immediate help. When man, the creature, sins, how much misery and grief he needlessly causes to so many others besides himself!)

CHAPTER 2

1. BLOW YE THE TRUMPET IN ZION, AND SOUND AN ALARM IN MY HOLY MOUNTAIN: LET ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND TREMBLE: FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD COMETH, FOR IT IS NIGH AT HAND; (The sound of the trumpet was used to call the Israelites together: Num. 10:1-3. In the time of war, an alarm was sounded: Num. 10:9; Jer. 4:19; 49:2. The sound of an alarm would strike fear into the hearts of the people. The invasion which they faced would be the invasion of the caterpillars, locusts, etc.—God's great, relentless army.)

2. A DAY OF DARKNESS AND OF GLOOMINESS, A DAY OF CLOUDS AND OF THICK DARKNESS, AS THE MORNING SPREAD UPON THE MOUNTAINS: (Ahead of time, people cannot conceive the straits, the difficulties, and the utter misery that a judgment from God will bring them. The real darkness and gloominess of sin are realized more in the day of God's judgment than in the day of the sinning. Probably the suddenness with which this judgment would strike is meant by the expression, "as the morning—the morning light—spread upon the mountains.") A GREAT PEOPLE AND A STRONG; THERE HATH NOT BEEN EVER THE LIKE, NEITHER SHALL BE ANY MORE AFTER IT, EVEN TO THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS. (It was this unprecedented plague that was soon to alight upon them. God has the best of blessings for those whom He loves most, but He has the severest of punishments for those who go the farthest from Him. Such were His dealings with His Old Testament people.)

3. A FIRE DEVouRETH BEFORE THEM; AND BE-

HIND THEM A FLAME BURNETH; THE LAND IS AS THE GARDEN OF EDEN BEFORE THEM; AND BEHIND THEM A DESOLATE WILDERNESS; YEA, AND NOTHING SHALL ESCAPE THEM, (They would find the land like a lush garden and would leave it as a desolate wilderness.)

4. THE APPEARANCE OF THEM IS AS THE APPEARANCE OF HORSES; (The head of the locust bears a striking resemblance to the head of the horse,) AND AS HORSEMEN, SO SHALL THEY RUN, (They would soon cover the land.)

5. LIKE THE NOISE OF CHARIOTS ON THE TOPS OF MOUNTAINS SHALL THEY LEAP, LIKE THE NOISE OF A FLAME OF FIRE THAT DEVoureth THE STUBBLE, AS A STRONG PEOPLE SET IN BATTLE ARRAY. (Bochart remarks of locusts, "The locusts fly with a great noise so as to be heard six miles off, and while they are eating the fruits of the earth, the sound of them is like that of a flame driven by the wind.")

6. BEFORE THEIR FACE THE PEOPLE SHALL BE MUCH PAINED; ALL FACES SHALL GATHER BLACKNESS, (The people of Palestine were as terrified by the infestation of locusts as people of a city are terrified by a bombing or as people of the plains are by a tornado.)

7. THEY SHALL RUN LIKE MIGHTY MEN; (And they were mighty,) THEY SHALL CLIMB THE WALL LIKE MEN OF WAR; AND THEY SHALL MARCH EVERY ONE ON HIS WAYS, AND THEY SHALL NOT BREAK THEIR RANKS, (Locusts keep right on moving in the direction that they are headed regardless of what is in their way. Thus, they climb up over walls and enter into houses through open windows in their forward march.)

8. NEITHER SHALL ONE THRUST ANOTHER; THEY SHALL WALK EVERY ONE IN HIS PATH; AND WHEN THEY FALL UPON THE SWORD, THEY SHALL NOT BE WOUNDED, (Nothing could stop them in their orderly march.)

9. THEY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO IN THE CITY; THEY SHALL RUN UPON THE WALL, THEY SHALL CLIMB UP UPON THE HOUSES; THEY SHALL ENTER IN AT THE WINDOWS LIKE A THIEF, (See comment on v.7)

10. THE EARTH SHALL QUAKE BEFORE THEM; THE

HEAVENS SHALL TREMBLE; THE SUN AND THE MOON SHALL BE DARK, AND THE STARS SHALL WITHDRAW THEIR SHINING; (Heaven and earth are personified as are probably the sun, moon, and stars.)

11. AND THE LORD SHALL UTTER HIS VOICE BEFORE HIS ARMY: (The beetles, v. 25. God was their commander.) FOR HIS CAMP IS VERY STRONG THAT EXECUTETH HIS WORD: FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS GREAT AND VERY TERRIBLE; AND WHO CAN ABIDE IT? (The mightiness of God can be seen in nature about us; it will be felt when His judgment falls. Men are more impressed with what they feel than by what they merely look at and disregard.)

12. THEREFORE ALSO NOW, SAITH THE LORD, TURN YE EVEN UNTO ME (The One whom they had forgotten, the Source of all blessings, the Inflicter of their chastisement, the One who truly loved them) WITH ALL YOUR HEART, (He wanted them to mean it,) AND WITH FASTING, AND WITH WEEPING, AND WITH MOURNING: (When outward circumstances get bad enough, man is normally brought down to grief and to seeking the face of God.)

13. AND REND YOUR HEART, AND NOT YOUR GARMENTS, (This is strong language. God wanted no surface actions or ceremonies. God said in Isaiah's day that He was tired of outward ritual that did not come from the heart and that did not affect their lives, Isa. 1:10-15. He wants every religious act to come forth from the heart of man: John 4:24; II Cor. 9:7; Rom. 6:17; Heb. 10:22; and many others. Should these of Joel's day rend their garments and not their hearts, they could not fool God and would thus have but added one more sin, and that a big one, to their long list of sins before God,) AND TURN UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD: FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND OF GREAT KINDNESS, AND REPENTETH HIM OF THE EVIL. (Where are those who say that the Old Testament pictures God as a cruel God while the New pictures Him as a loving God? God is set forth as both loving and just in the Old Testament, and the same can be said for His description in the New. God is kind to mankind. He notices our failures, but He is slow to anger. Even then, He will be gracious and merciful if we shall repent in all sincerity before Him. Gladly then will He reverse His decision: He will "repent Him of the evil" that He was sending or said that He would

send, Joel, then, was sent not only to announce the judgment of God, but the mercy of God also—just like gospel preachers today.)

14. WHO KNOWETH IF HE WILL RETURN AND REPENT, AND LEAVE A BLESSING BEHIND HIM; EVEN A MEAT-OFFERING AND A DRINK-OFFERING UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD? (Even though they had so sinned, if they would turn to the Lord as prescribed above, there was the possibility that these calamitous times could be averted, or even if such repentance were delayed until the calamity had already hit, God could perhaps be entreated to put an end to the plague.)

15. BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, SANCTIFY A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY: (Lose not time getting people right before God.)

16. GATHER THE PEOPLE, SANCTIFY THE CONGREGATION, ASSEMBLE THE ELDERS, GATHER THE CHILDREN, AND THOSE THAT SUCK THE BREASTS: (Everybody would be affected; therefore, everybody should be present at the solemn meeting.) LET THE BRIDEGROOM GO FORTH OF HIS CHAMBER, AND THE BRIDE OUT OF HER CLOSET. (Even the special occasions should give way to the importance of this imploring God for mercy.)

17. LET THE PRIESTS, THE MINISTERS OF THE LORD, WEEP BETWEEN THE PORCH AND THE ALTAR, AND LET THEM SAY, SPARE THY PEOPLE, O LORD, AND GIVE NOT THINE HERITAGE TO REPROACH, THAT THE HEATHEN SHOULD RULE OVER THEM; WHEREFORE SHOULD THEY SAY AMONG THE PEOPLE, WHERE IS THEIR GOD? (The priests, the divinely appointed intercessors, were to intercede for the people. Man, being unworthy to come before God personally, must depend upon God's appointed priesthood to make their plea to God. Can you not hear the cries of these men as they prostrated themselves in the sacred area before God and pleaded for Him to spare His people? Being weakened materially by this plague, they would naturally be weakened politically and would be an easy prey for their neighboring nations that were always ready for the opportunity to invade them. This prayer of the priests was not to be one of selfishness, for the purpose was that the enemies could not say, "Where is their God?")

18. THEN WILL THE LORD BE JEALOUS FOR HIS LAND, AND PITY HIS PEOPLE. (Man is so unpredictable, being driven by whims and fancies and so easily beset by sin and affected by surroundings and circumstances. But, God is predictable, for He moves by principle and is faithful to His decisions. If the people would repent, they could count upon His mercy. Both the land and the people had suffered; both would rejoice when His mercy came.)

19. YEA, THE LORD WILL ANSWER AND SAY UNTO HIS PEOPLE, BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU CORN, AND WINE, AND OIL, (The field grains, the vineyards, and the olive groves would again yield their abundance, and how welcome it would be!) AND YE SHALL BE SATISFIED THEREWITH: (Before the plague, when everything had been so abundant, it was hard to believe Joel's prediction that a shortage was ahead, but it was probably equally as hard for the people to believe in the days of the plague that abundance would come.) AND I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH AMONG THE HEATHEN:

20. BUT I WILL REMOVE FAR OFF FROM YOU THE NORTHERN ARMY, (The locusts had probably been brought into the land by a strong north wind.) AND WILL DRIVE HIM INTO A LAND BARREN AND DESOLATE, (The Syrian Desert.) WITH HIS FACE TOWARD THE EAST SEA, (The Dead Sea,) AND HIS HINDER PART TOWARD THE UTMOST SEA, (The Mediterranean Sea,) AND HIS STINK SHALL COME UP, AND HIS ILL SAVOUR SHALL COME UP, BECAUSE HE HATH DONE GREAT THINGS. (The same power that brought them into the land was the only power that could remove them from the land. God would remove them with a mighty wind that would take them out of the land. Such winds have been known to remove them into the Mediterranean Sea, whose waters washed them upon the shore where, exposed to the rays of the sun, they sent up just such a stink and ill savour as are mentioned here. God having used these insects to accomplish His purpose, He now removes them at will. God has used various means to accomplish His purpose: a stormy sea, a sea monster, an east wind, a gourd, and a worm in Jonah's day; a talking ass in Balaam's day; and these plaguing beetles in Joel's day.)

21. FEAR NOT, O LAND; BE GLAD AND REJOICE: FOR THE LORD WILL DO GREAT THINGS. (The first

to enjoy relief from the beetles would be nature itself. It is the first called upon to rejoice.)

22. BE NOT AFRAID, YE BEASTS OF THE FIELD; FOR THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS DO SPRING, FOR THE TREE BEARETH HER FRUIT, THE FIG TREE AND THE VINE DO YIELD THEIR STRENGTH. (The animals would be the next to experience relief from the plagues and drouth as the pastures began to supply them springing grass. They are the second group called upon to rejoice.)

23. BE GLAD THEN, YE CHILDREN OF ZION, AND REJOICE IN THE LORD YOUR GOD: (Man, the cause of the plague, would be the last to experience relief, for he would have to wait for the new crop. He is the last called upon to rejoice.) FOR HE HATH GIVEN YOU THE FORMER RAIN MODERATELY, AND HE WILL CAUSE TO COME DOWN FOR YOU THE RAIN, THE FORMER RAIN, AND THE LATTER RAIN (The farmers of Palestine planted their wheat in later summer and harvested it in spring. They depended upon the fall rains, here called the former rain, to germinate their planting and the latter rains, here called the latter rain, to fill the heads before harvest. Without these two rainy seasons, they would have no crops.) IN THE FIRST MONTH. (The first month of their sacred calender, Nisan or Abib, which corresponded to the normal time of their latter rain. Their civil calender has the year begin in the fall. God started them upon a new calender (the sacred calender) at the time of the Passover, which occurred in the month Nisan of their civil calendar, and He said that that was to be to them the beginning of months, Exo. 12:2.)

24. AND THE FLOORS (The threshing floors. They did not have our modern means of threshing their grain. Instead, they found a large area of native rock slab, slightly cupped in the middle, upon which they spread the grain to be threshed. Then they brought in their large hooved oxen that walked around over the unthreshed grain, and as they walked, the ripe kernels shattered to the bottom. Then they threw the straw off, and the grain remained on the floor ready to be gathered into their garner.) SHALL BE FULL OF WHEAT, AND THE FATS (The American Standard version says "vats", which is clearer to us. In order to press the juice out of their grapes and olives, they chiseled a basin out of the rock into which the grapes and olives were placed. These too were trampled under-

foot in order to press out the juice and the oil. Through a short orifice in the rock, the liquid flowed into a nearby vat at a lower elevation,) SHALL OVERFLOW WITH WINE AND OIL. (Never had a harvest seemed so wonderful to them as this first one following the drouth and plague.)

25. AND I WILL RESTORE TO YOU THE YEARS THAT THE LOCUST HATH EATEN, THE CANKERWORM, AND THE CATERPILLAR, AND THE PALMERWORM, MY GREAT ARMY WHICH I SENT AMONG YOU. (God was not obligated to do this, for they received what they deserved, but when people repent, He is more than glad to bless them richly and abundantly. This restoring to them what they had lost during those lean years would account for the great plenty that he spoke of in v. 24.)

26. AND YE SHALL EAT IN PLENTY, AND BE SATISFIED, AND PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, THAT HATH DEALT WONDROUSLY WITH YOU: (This chastening was to bring about the fruit of repentance which God wished for. How much happier God was to see them praising His name and He blessing them than to see them suffering at His hand because of their sins. Notice that they were not merely happy for better times—they were a spiritual people, praising God,) AND MY PEOPLE SHALL NEVER BE ASHAMED. (This is in contrast to the shame of the husbandmen mentioned in 1:11. In that verse, they were ashamed of their poor agriculture. When God finally got them ashamed of their lives before Him, the more important concern of the two, then He removed the curse, and they no longer had to be ashamed of either their lives before God nor the conditions of their vineyards.)

27. AND YE SHALL KNOW (So often do we find this expression, "And ye shall know," in the prophets' writings. God wants His people to know. When His Old Testament people did not know that He was the only God, they worshipped idols. When they did not know that it was He who gave them their blessings, they gave praise to others. When they did not know that He was going to take vengeance upon them, they did not fear before Him. When they did not worship Him, they did not do His will. People today should not proceed upon suppositions when the clear light of truth is available to them so that they can walk in knowledge and assurance,) THAT I AM IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL. (His covenant people. As a people, they would be so blessed that not another nation on earth would be like them. God

wanted to be with them—in their very midst. When they built the tabernacle in the wilderness, the various tribes camped around it—it was in the center of them.) AND THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND NONE ELSE AND MY PEOPLE SHALL NEVER BE ASHAMED.

28. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS AFTERWARD, (Sometime after God's blessing them in a material way would He bless them in an even greater way spiritually in the way specified in the following verses. Joel does not say how long afterwards it would be except to say that it would be before the arrival of another terrible time of judgment mentioned in v. 31 as "the great and terrible day of the Lord".) THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH; (According to Peter, this passage began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14-21. We who live this way from Pentecost are in a better position to appreciate the greatness of the blessings being promised in this passage, for we know the blessings that have come upon the human race because of the coming of the Holy Spirit, for when He came, came also the inception of the new covenant age. The apostles of Christ were the first to receive the Holy Spirit. After them, the Gentile Cornelius and his family received the same measure of the Spirit as did the apostles, the baptismal measure; various ones received miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit for use in the infant years of the church; and all who become children of God through Jesus Christ receive the Spirit in an indwelling manner. The expression, "all flesh," is not to be extended beyond the above limits.) AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS:

29. AND ALSO UPON THE SERVANTS AND UPON THE HANDMAIDS IN THOSE DAYS WILL I POUR OUT MY SPIRIT. (In order to show the width of bestowing the coming Spirit, Joel mentions the following groups: your sons and daughters, your old men and young men, and the servants and handmaids. The first group would show that both male and female would be recipients; the second group, both young and old; the third group, that even the slave class would be participants. Basically, it would seem that Joel is here predicting that which was fulfilled in the bestowal of miraculous gifts in the early church—prophecy, inspired dreams, and visions. While the recorded fulfillment of this prophecy would show that mostly men received these

powers, we do have recorded that Philip had four daughters who prophesied, Acts 21:9, and I Cor. 11:5 also refers to women prophesying. We are not to conclude, however, in the light of other passages that these women became evangelists or elders in the church.)

30. AND I WILL SHEW WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND IN THE EARTH, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND PILLARS OF SMOKE,

31. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD COME, (Similar language was used by Jesus to foretell events that would precede His second coming, Matt. 24:29,30; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21:25-28, According to Luke's account, these would be signs to the redeemed that the coming of the Lord would be near. But, notice that with this verse, the prophet introduces us to another "day of the Lord", the final day of the Lord. The first one discussed in Joel had to do with God's wrath against a sinning nation, this one will have to do with His wrath against a sinful world. Actually we can properly think of Joel as a prophet of the "day of the Lord", for in telling them of the one to come upon his nation. Inspiration carried him forward to the one to come upon the world. The first one may possibly be considered a type of the second. At this point, let us digress long enough to discuss a matter brought up by this passage. Some think that the day of the Lord mentioned in this section of Joel is the day of Pentecost, but this cannot be for the following reasons: (a) these things were to take place "before" that day; (b) on Pentecost, no women were granted the gift of prophecy; and (c) on Pentecost, the Spirit was not poured out upon "all flesh"—only on Jews.

32. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE DELIVERED: (This was a part of Peter's quotation. The deliverance that he was preaching through Christ was a spiritual deliverance, a deliverance from sin and a consequent deliverance from the wrath of God when that great and terrible day of the Lord would come upon the world. "Whosoever" would include Gentiles unto whom this same deliverance from sin was offered through the gospel. To "call on the name of the Lord" means to look to the Lord for deliverance, to turn to Him, to be a wor-

shipper of Him and a doer of His will. It implies much more than merely praying. In our quest for physical recovery, we "call on" the doctor, but when we do so, we place ourselves into his hands to diagnose and to prescribe, and our call upon him will do us no good unless we do what he says. Actually, turning to the Lord in gospel conversion is equivalent to "calling on the name of the Lord", Acts 22:16.) FOR IN MOUNT ZION AND IN JERUSALEM (Isa. 2:2,3 says the saving covenant message would go forth from Zion and Jerusalem.) SHALL BE DELIVERANCE, AS THE LORD HATH SAID; (If quoting Scripture, he probably refers to Oba. 17, although he could be referring to Isa. 46:13 and Isa. 59:20. On the other hand, he may be quoting a well known oral prophecy.) AND IN THE REMNANT WHOM THE LORD SHALL CALL. (The prophets never lost sight of the "remnant", the small portion of the nation that would be saved while the bulk of it perished because of unrighteousness.)

CHAPTER 3

1. FOR, BEHOLD, IN THOSE DAYS, AND IN THAT TIME, WHEN I SHALL BRING AGAIN THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM, (Such terminology is often employed throughout the books of the prophets to refer to great things that God was going to do for His people. It is usually in the language of His Old Testament people though the fulfillment frequently applies to His New Testament people. In the end of the preceding chapter, Joel has just told what great things God was going to do for His people in our dispensation.)

2. I WILL ALSO GATHER ALL NATIONS, AND WILL BRING THEM DOWN INTO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT, AND WILL PLEAD WITH THEM THERE FOR MY PEOPLE AND FOR MY HERITAGE ISRAEL, WHOM THEY HAVE SCATTERED AMONG THE NATIONS, AND PARTED MY LAND. (Something different was in store for the enemy nations, most of whom have now ceased to exist upon earth. "Valley of Jehoshaphat" can also be translated "Valley of Jehovah's judgment". Since there is no valley in Palestine (or elsewhere) called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, many wonder if this should not be translated the valley of Jehovah's judgment. Verse 14 of this very chapter would suggest so where it refers to the same valley as the valley of decision (Jehovah's decision). Throughout the prophetic books, God

has the nation of His people surviving many ups and downs and becoming an exalted people and the enemy nations—like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Edom, and others—becoming heaps and desolations.)

3. AND THEY HAVE CAST LOTS FOR MY PEOPLE; (This was customary in wartime among the allies who conquered. See Obadiah 11 and Nahum 3:10.) AND HAVE GIVEN A BOY FOR A HARLOT, (The conquered Jews had become slaves. Their cheap valuation is here suggested by a boy with all of his future before him being traded for a harlot.) AND SOLD A GIRL FOR WINE, THAT THEY MIGHT DRINK. (Another example of cheap evaluation, for the wine would soon be gone which they would receive in exchange for the girl.)

4. YEA, AND WHAT HAVE YE TO DO WITH ME, O TYRE, AND ZIDON, (Pheonician cities along the Mediterranean coast.) AND ALL THE COASTS OF PALESTINE? WILL YE RENDER ME A RECOMPENSE? AND IF YE RECOMPENSE ME, SWIFTLY AND SPEEDILY WILL I RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD; (God had led His people in victories against these enemies. Because of their abuse of the Jews as a retaliation, God would visit them with an even heavier judgment.)

5. BECAUSE YE HAVE TAKEN MY SILVER AND MY GOLD, AND HAVE CARRIED INTO YOUR TEMPLES MY GOODLY PLEASANT THINGS; (It was customary for nations to plunder the temples of the conquered and to put the vessels and treasures taken into their own temples. See II Chron. 36:7.)

6. THE CHILDREN ALSO OF JUDAH AND THE CHILDREN OF JERUSALEM HAVE YE SOLD UNTO THE GRECIANS, THAT YE MIGHT REMOVE THEM FAR FROM THEIR BORDER. (It was also a practice of war for a nation to sell some of the captives to other nations for slaves. The Phoenicians had sold Jews to the Greeks, which took them far from their native home.)

7. BEHOLD, I WILL RAISE THEM OUT OF THE PLACE WHITHER YE HAVE SOLD THEM, AND WILL RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD; (Men's own evil will return upon them sooner or later.)

8. AND I WILL SELL YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS

INTO THE HAND OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH, AND THEY SHALL SELL THEM TO THE SABEANS, (Arabians) TO A PEOPLE FAR OFF; FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT. (During the Grecian wars of Alexandria, history records that the Jews bought Phoenician slaves from the Greeks and in turn sold them to the Arabs—just as was prophesied here.)

9. PROCLAIM YE THIS AMONG THE GENTILES; PREPARE WAR, WAKE UP THE MIGHTY MEN, LET ALL THE MEN OF WAR DRAW NEAR; LET THEM COME UP.

10. BEAT YOUR PLOUGHSHARES INTO SWORDS, AND YOUR PRUNING HOOKS INTO SPEARS: (Just the opposite of Isa. 2:4 and Mic. 4:3. Isaiah and Micah were foretelling a time of peace, Joel a time of conflict.) LET THE WEAK SAY, I AM STRONG.

11. ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES, AND COME, ALL YE HEATHEN, AND GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER ROUND ABOUT: THITHER CAUSE THY MIGHTY ONES TO COME DOWN, O LORD.

12. LET THE HEATHEN BE WAKENED, AND COME UP TO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT: (This passage is a continuation of the judgment of God which began to be discussed in v. 2 of this chapter.) FOR THERE WILL I SIT TO JUDGE ALL THE HEATHEN ROUND ABOUT.

13. PUT YE IN THE SICKLE, FOR THE HARVEST IS RIPE: (For another place where judgment is likened to a grape harvest, see Rev. 14:14-20. What a picture of judgment—not one grape eludes being mashed and its juice pressed out, and just that thorough is the judgment of God upon nations and upon individuals. The figure shows that God had put up with a lot all the while that the grapes were growing and ripening, but there comes a time when God will take no more. He says, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.") FOR THE PRESS IS FULL, AND THE FATS OVERFLOW; FOR THE WICKEDNESS IS GREAT.

14. MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION: (Jehovah's decision against them, the same as the "Valley of Jehoshaphat"). FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION. (All these nations of Joel's day have suffered vengeance at the mouth of God as prophesied by Jeremiah and others. To these times of

vengeance, Joel may be referring, but just as Sodom and Gomorrah once destroyed from the face of the earth by God will yet face the judgment of the great day (Matt. 10:14,15), so will these nations have to face the Almighty in the same judgment, and it is likely that Joel refers to this latter judgment.)

15. THE SUN AND THE MOON SHALL BE DARKENED, AND THE STARS SHALL WITHDRAW THEIR SHINING. (See comment on chapter 2:30,31.)

16. THE LORD ALSO SHALL ROAR OUT OF ZION, AND UTTER HIS VOICE FROM JERUSALEM; (God consistently claims Zion and Jerusalem as the place from which He would speak.) AND THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SHALL SHAKE: (When God spoke from Mt. Sinai, everything and everybody present were thus affected, We are told to tremble at the Word of the Lord, Isa. 66:2.) BUT THE LORD WILL BE THE HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE, AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. (Just as the mother cat is the comfort and the provider for the kittens, though a dread to every mouse about her, so is God the hope and strength of His people, though the destroyer of His enemies.)

17. SO SHALL YE KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD DWELLING IN ZION, MY HOLY MOUNTAIN: (Once again God claims Zion as His dwelling place. New Testament Israel, the new covenant people, are said to have come to Mt. Zion rather than to the earthly mountain of Sinai where the old covenant was given, Heb. 12:18,22.) THEN SHALL JERUSALEM BE HOLY, (Heb. 12:22 refers to it as the heavenly Jerusalem, and Paul speaks of it as "Jerusalem which is above", Gal. 4:26.) AND THERE SHALL NO STRANGERS PASS THROUGH HER ANY MORE. (The Old Testament city of Jerusalem knew what it was to have enemies besiege her, conquer her, and tread her down, but the Jerusalem that Joel refers to would be different. Nothing defiling or disrupting will ever enter the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21:27.)

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 RIVERS OF JUDAH SHALL FLOW WITH WATERS, (Speaking of heavenly, eternal, and spiritual things, God employed the language of men to picture a most desirable, ideal con-

dition.) AND A FOUNTAIN SHALL COME FORTH OUT OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, AND SHALL WATER THE VALLEY OF SHITTIM. (Surely this last statement helps us to settle for a spiritual fulfillment, for a fountain coming from the house of the Lord in Jerusalem would not naturally water the valley of Shittim on the other side of the Jordan River. Blessings to others beyond the borders of Israel, the Gentiles, would come forth from the Jerusalem here referred to, and so they have through the gospel.)

19. EGYPT (One of the enemy nations,) SHALL BE A DESOLATION, AND EDOM (Another enemy,) SHALL BE A DESOLATE WILDERNESS, FOR THE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH, BECAUSE THEY HAVE SHED INNOCENT BLOOD IN THEIR LAND. (The book of Obadiah gives parallel material on this subject.)

20. BUT JUDAH SHALL DWELL FOR EVER, AND JERUSALEM FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. (God's people and God's city would abide.)

21. FOR I WILL CLEANSE THEIR BLOOD THAT I HAVE NOT CLEANSED: FOR THE LORD DWELLETH IN ZION. (This eternal life will be realized through the grace of God as explained in the New Testament epistles of Paul.)