

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF JOEL

* * * THE DAY OF THE LORD * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." **Joel 1:15**

AUTHOR: Joel (c. * BC)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. Joel was a common name in Israel; it means *Jehovah is God*. The firstborn son of Samuel was named Joel (1Sam8:2), and the name appears in numerous O.T. genealogies; however, Scripture provides no information concerning these individuals outside of their place in the genealogical records, and none of these appear¹ to be Joel the prophet. Nothing is known of Joel the prophet outside of his writing in the Book of Joel.

*The Book of Joel does not provide any direct indication as to when it was written. No kings of Israel or Judah are mentioned, nor any reference to prominent Gentile empires such as Assyria, Babylon, or Persia. Joel does mention priests and offerings made in the Temple. Conventional dating of the Book of Joel has placed it very early in the history of Israel, circa the 8th or 9th century BC. However, the historical books (1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles) that document this period of time make no reference to the devastating locust plague/famine that is such a prominent subject in Joel 1. The general consensus of an early date for Joel is largely arbitrary, probably influenced by its placement in the canon (i.e., early in the order of the Twelve).

Alternatively, a post-exilic date of composition has considerable support and in many ways makes more sense. In such a scenario, Joel 3 refers not to a regathering of the nation of Judah from Babylon (as is the conclusion of those who presume an early date for Joel), but to the regathering of diaspora Jews to Israel in the end times; consistent with this view, Joel 3:17 connects this regathering to the national conversion of Israel (Cp., Ezek39:25-29). The references to priests and offerings in Joel refer to the second temple, rebuilt by the Jews returning from Babylon (c. 515 BC). Joel refers to the rulers of the nation as "elders" (cf. Joel1:2; 2:16), rather than kings, which would be consistent with the form of government in post-exilic Israel (Cp., Ezr10:14). Joel writes at a time of spiritual declension, similar to conditions described by the prophet Malachi (c. 425 BC); indeed, the plague of locusts/famine points to the LORD's judgment upon the nation. Joel appears to refer to numerous other prophets, including Amos, Jonah, and Ezekiel (Cp., Joel3:16 with Amos1:2; Joel2:13 with Jon4:2; Joel2:3 with Ezek36:35; Joel2:10 with Ezek32:7; Joel2:27-28 with Ezek39:28-29; Ezekiel wrote in the 6th century BC during the Babylonian captivity; Ezek1:1-2), suggesting he wrote after them. Finally, the reference to Greek slave trade is consistent with a post-exilic date, but difficult to reconcile in the 8th or 9th century BC.

¹ Joel's father was Pethuel (Joel1:1), but that name does not appear in any O.T. genealogy.

Thus, a post-exilic date for the composition of Joel, certainly after completion of the second temple (c. 515 BC), and potentially a contemporary of Malachi (c. 425 BC), seems to make the most sense of the internal evidence within the Book of Joel.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. A devastating plague of locusts that had swept through Israel (Joel1:4), resulting in a famine in the land (Joel1:7-13), served as the occasion for Joel's writing. More than simply a natural disaster, the locust-caused famine indicates the nation was experiencing discipline from the LORD for unfaithfulness under the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Lev26:27-31; Deut28:38-39). Thus, Joel wrote at a time of spiritual apostasy in Israel.

MESSAGE OF JOEL. If the late, post-exilic date for Joel is correct, the book serves to take the disparate events prophesied to occur during the Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation period; Dan9:27), spoken of by all the O.T. prophets, and set them in proper chronological order (much as the Book of Revelation does on a grander scale). Thus, the major events of the first half of the Tribulation are the Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel in which the LORD intervenes to supernaturally save the nation (Ezek38-39), followed by the conversion of the nation of Israel. The major events of the second half of the Tribulation are the gathering of all nations against Israel at Armageddon, followed by the second coming of Christ to deliver Israel and judge those nations [see the CHART: THE PROPHECY OF JOEL]. In this sense, the message of Joel is apocalyptic; there is no deliverance promised to Israel for Joel's generation; rather, the nation's hope is to rest on the promises of God to be fulfilled in the distant, eschatological future.

THE DAY OF THE LORD. There is considerable confusion concerning "the day of the LORD", which is the subject of the Book of Joel. In general, the Bible uses this expression in two ways, connotatively and denotatively². Connotatively, a "day of the LORD" is any occasion in which the LORD directly intervenes in the course of human history for the purpose of judgment (e.g., the locust plague in Israel that is the context for Joel 1; Joel1:15). Denotatively, "the day of the LORD" is synonymous with the yet unfulfilled 70th week of Daniel (Dan9:27), commonly referred to as the 7-year Tribulation period that immediately precedes the second coming of Christ.

OUTLINE OF JOEL.

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| I. Locust Plague as a Prophetic Type of the Day of the LORD | Joel 1 |
| II. The Day of the LORD: <u>1st Half</u> of the Tribulation | Joel 2 |
| A. Invasion of Israel from the North (Ezekiel 38-39) | Joel 2:1-27 |
| B. Salvation of the Nation of Israel | Joel 2:28-32 |
| III. The Day of the LORD: <u>2nd Half</u> of the Tribulation | Joel 3 |
| A. All Nations against Israel at Armageddon | Joel 3:1-15 |
| B. Coming of Christ/Inauguration of the Kingdom | Joel 3:16-21 |

² This is analogous to the Bible's use of "antichrist". There have been many antichrist figures throughout human history, yet they all serve as prophetic types of a future man who (during the 70th week of Daniel) will be the Antichrist (cf. 2Thess2:3,7-8; 1Jn2:18).

CHAPTER 1

LOCUST PLAGUE AS A PROPHETIC TYPE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

Joel begins his prophecy with a description of a locust plague, followed naturally by famine, experienced in his day. Under the Mosaic Covenant, such was a "curse" for covenant unfaithfulness (Deut28:38-39). So devastating were the effects of this disaster, unlike any experienced previously by the nation, that it served as a prophetic type of "the [future] day of the LORD" (Joel1:15; Cp., Rev9:3).

- [1] Joel means *Jehovah is God*; though a common name in the O.T., the prophet Joel appears only in the Book of Joel. Pethuel means *persuaded by God*.
- [2] The locust plague that Joel will describe in this chapter was of such devastating proportions, never before experienced by the Israelites (apparently including even the 8th plague³ in Egypt; Exod10:1-20), that it will be used as a prophetic type of the day of the LORD (Cp., Dan12:1; Matt24:21).
- [3] The historical experiences of the nation of Israel, recorded in Scripture, provide spiritual lessons that are to be taught to all subsequent generations of Israel (and the Church; Cp., Rom15:4; 1Cor10:6,11).
- [4] Here begins Joel's description of the locust plague. All the insects listed (i.e., "palmer worm", "locust", "cankerworm", and "caterpillar") are varieties or forms of locusts⁴ (Cp., Ps105:34; Isa33:4). The poetic imagery of this verse depicts the plague as one of growing intensity of destruction; each successive wave of locusts devours more of what the previous wave missed.
- [5] Drunkenness was a national sin condemned by many of the prophets. The locust plague was, in part, a judgment against the "drunkards" and "drinkers of wine", as the "wine" will be "cut off from your mouth" (i.e., there will be no more grapes left, from which to make "new wine").
- [6] The locust plague prophetically foreshadows a future invasion of Israel by "a nation". The metaphor used in association with that "nation" is a "lion", which proponents for an early date of the Book of Joel see as Babylon (cf. Dan7:4). If the later date for Joel is correct, this points to the demonic armies of the Dragon released in the 5th trumpet judgment which are likened to "locusts" having "the teeth of lions" (cf. Rev9:7-8).
- [7] Joel's prophecy is "the word of the LORD" (v1), so the LORD is speaking. From the LORD's perspective, "my vine" (cf. Ps80:8,14-15; Isa5:1-7; 27:2-3; Jer2:21; 12:10; Hos10:1) and "my fig tree" (cf. Jer24:1-10; Hos9:10; Matt21:19; 24:32-34) are common symbols for the nation of Israel. The invasion(s) of Israel during the 7-year

³ The plagues upon Egypt that preceded the exodus were themselves a grand prophetic type of the day of the LORD, which is why most of the divine judgments in Revelation 6-18 have parallels to the plagues upon Egypt.

⁴ The four varieties of locusts may depict the four Gentile empires prophesied in Daniel 2 and 7: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Tribulation will devastate the land even as the locust plague in the days of Joel.

- [8] Israel is exhorted to "lament" in the deepest possible way, likened to a "virgin" who lost a "husband" in "her youth", over the coming curse of the LORD for the nation's covenant unfaithfulness. The figure of an untimely disruption of the relationship between a young bride and her husband pictures Israel as the wife of Jehovah (Cp., Jer3:6-20).
- [9] One of the consequences of the locust plague was the impossibility of making the "meal offering" and "drink offering" needed for the morning and evening oblations (Lev6:20).
- [10] The locust plague destroyed all the "grain" fields, vineyards, and olive orchards, cutting off the supply of meal, "new wine", and "oil". Practically, this resulted in famine for the people (and their livestock). Spiritually, this made it impossible to worship the LORD by means of sacrifice and offerings, which typified the broken relationship between Israel and Jehovah.
- [11] The "wheat" and the "barley" fields "perished" in the locust plague.
- [12] Included in the devastation from the locust plague were the "vine", the "fig tree", the "pomegranate tree", the "palm tree", and the "apple tree" (i.e., the complete destruction of all agriculture in Israel; Cp., v4).
- [13] The "priests" and "ministers of the altar" (i.e., Levites) are exhorted to "lament" and "wail" over the inability to worship "God" through "meal" and "drink" offerings performed in the temple. Though caused by the locust plague in the days of Joel, this points prophetically to the Antichrist, who at the midpoint of the Tribulation will "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Dan9:27).
- [14] The whole nation is exhorted to demonstrate repentance through "fast[ing]", assembling themselves together to "cry unto the LORD" at the temple. During the dispensation of the Law, the LORD's presence was uniquely manifested in His temple, and worship of the LORD could only occur there (Deut16:16). Note that the rulers of the nation are referred to as "elders", with no mention of a king or princes; this is consistent with post-exilic Israel (Cp., Ezr10:14).
- [15] As the locust plague was designed to cause the nation to repent and return to the LORD in the days of Joel, so the purpose of "the [coming] day of the LORD" (i.e., the Tribulation) will be to cause Israel to repent and turn to Christ (Zech12:10). Israel will be saved, but it will come after "destruction from the Almighty" such that only one-third of the Jews that enter the Tribulation will "endure to the end" (Matt24:13; Cp., Zech13:9).

The Day of the LORD. The Day of the LORD should be understood in contrast with man's day (cf. Dan2:31-33; 7:1-8; Luk21:24) and Satan's day (cf. Luk4:5-6; Jn12:31; 2Cor4:4). It is that period of time

during which the LORD brings His will to pass on the earth⁵ **by force**. When the prophets speak of coming "the day of the LORD", they most often have in view the 7-year Tribulation period (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week; Dan9:27). However, there is a sense in which it begins with the Rapture and extends through the Millennial Kingdom (cf. 1Thess5:2; 2Pet3:10).

- [16] Just as the locust plague caused the "food" to be "cut off" in the days of Joel, the judgments of the Tribulation will cause world-wide famine (cf. Rev6:5-6; 8:7-11; 16:3-4). As worship in "the house of God" was impossible for Joel, the abomination of desolation that will be committed by the Antichrist at the midpoint of the Tribulation will put an end to Jewish worship at the temple (cf. Dan9:27; Matt24:15; 2Thess2:4; Rev13:14-15); since the second temple was destroyed in 70 AD, this necessitates the rebuilding of a third temple to be operational during the first half of the Tribulation.

Validity of the Tribulation Temple. Many Christians, taking their perspective only from the dispensation of Grace, view the coming Tribulation Temple as illegitimate, erroneously believing that the sacrifice of Christ has put an end to all future animal sacrifices. That is not the case, as there will clearly be sacrifices made in the Millennial Temple during the Kingdom dispensation (cf. Jer33:18; Ezek44:15; Zech14:16-21). The Tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel (Dan9:27), the final 7 years remaining of the dispensation of Law, parenthetically interrupted by the Church Age (Dan9:26); sacrifices are required for Israel during the dispensation of Law. Furthermore, God sends and supernaturally preserves His two witnesses (i.e., Moses and Elijah) to oversee the building of the Tribulation Temple (Rev11:1-6), and He views the Antichrist's defiling of the Tribulation Temple as an abomination (Dan9:27), neither of which makes sense if the Tribulation Temple is illegitimate. Sacrifice in the Tribulation Temple will be the valid expression of worship for Israel, even after they acknowledge Jesus as Messiah (cf. Rev12:17; 14:12).

- [17] There is no good "seed" to replant the fields devoured by the locusts. The "barns" are "broken down" from disuse, since there is no "grain".
- [18] The "herds of cattle" and "flocks of sheep" suffer from the fact that "they have no pasture".
- [19] Here, the "pastures" and the "trees" have been destroyed not by locusts, but by "fire" and "flame", which looks forward to the future judgments during the Tribulation (cf. Rev8:7).
- [20] Similarly, the "rivers of waters" being "dried up" also looks forward to the Tribulation period (cf. Rev8:10-11; 16:4,12).

⁵ The indoctrination of Calvinism throughout Christendom has resulted in many Christians mistakenly believing that God's perfect will comes to pass at every moment in time. This cannot be the case, since the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to pray the petition, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt6:10).

CHAPTER 2

FIRST HALF OF THE TRIBULATION

Whereas Joel 1 presented an historical locust plague as a type of the Day of the LORD, Joel 2-3 prophesy directly concerning that future period of time. Joel 2 concerns the first half of the 7-year Tribulation period, during which the nation of Israel will be attacked from the north by an alliance between Russia and the Islamic enemies of Israel (Ezek38-39); the supernatural deliverance of Israel by the LORD at that time (Joel2:20-21) will result in the conversion of the nation (Joel2:28-32).

- [1] This "blow[ing of] the trumpet in Zion" was a military "alarm" to assemble "all the inhabitants of the land [of Israel]" for battle (cf. Num10:1-6). The context is "the day of the LORD" (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation period), which "cometh". Such a blowing of trumpets was the responsibility of the priests (Num10:8), which suggests that both the priesthood and Temple have been restored at this time.
- [2] The day of the LORD (v1) will be an unprecedented time of suffering and trial for Israel, elsewhere called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer30:7); "there hath not been ever the like, neither shall any more be after it" (cf. Dan12:1; Matt24:21). The "great people and a strong" is a reference to the nation prophesied to invade Israel (cf. Joell:6).

INVASION OF ISRAEL FROM THE NORTH

- [3] The restored land of Israel is compared to "the garden of Eden" (Cp., Ezek36:35), but in the wake of the invading army it will be turned into a "desolate wilderness" (analogous to the destruction caused by the locust plague).
- [4] The "appearance" of the invading army is "like" that of "horses", suggesting military speed and superiority⁶.
- [5] This verse is an adequate description of the conditions of modern warfare. It is characterized by "noise", likened to that of "chariots" bearing down upon their enemies, and "a flame of fire" that destroys everything in its path.
- [6] The idea of this verse is that before the invading army, the people of Israel are terrified (Cp., Nah2:10).
- [7] The invading army will be an organized and efficient force.
- [9] Much like the locust plague, the advance of the invading army will be seemingly impossible to stop or even slow.
- [10] Some elements of this verse sound like a description of modern warfare, while some undoubtedly allude to the seal and trumpet judgments that will be simultaneously unleashed during the first half of the Tribulation (Cp., Rev6:12; 8:12). In an analogous way, the

⁶ Ancient Israel did not use horses in combat; indeed, they were forbidden from doing so (Deut17:16; Ps20:7; Isa31:1).

locust plague had resulted in a "dark[ening]" (i.e., obscuring) of the "sun", "moon", and "stars".

Modern Warfare. Joel's prophecy concerns a military invasion that will occur during the future Tribulation period. As such, he described it using words and concepts available to him as an ancient person, such as "horses" (v4), "chariots" (v5), "swords" (v8), and "fire" (v5); yet he deliberately and repeatedly used "like" as a term of comparison (vv3-7), indicating that he actually saw something else. Clearly, this was Joel's way of communicating aspects of modern warfare (yet future from even our own place in history) using the language available to him in the 5th century BC.

- [11] The "army" that is described as that of "the LORD" is the invading army of "Gog, of the land of Magog" and his Islamic allies (i.e., Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, Togarmah, etc.; Ezek38:2-6). Gog will "executeth [the LORD's] word" (cf. Ezek38:4) to chasten the unbelieving nation of Israel, just as Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were used in the same manner (Cp., Hab1:5-10). This invasion will occur during "the day of the LORD"; note that "the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, and who can abide it" connects to the 6th seal judgment (Rev6:17), which occurs during the first half of the Tribulation.
- [12] The LORD's use of foreign nations to invade and/or enslave Israel, both past (i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome) and future (i.e., Magog), is not for the purpose of destroying Israel (which can never happen; Jer31:35-37), but to chastise Israel in hopes she will "turn even to me with all your heart".
- [13] The LORD desires sincere repentance, not merely an external (even ostentatious) pretense. The last half of the verse is a quotation from Jonah 4:2; as God withheld His judgment of Nineveh when that nation repented in the days of Jonah (cf. Jer18:7-8), Israel's future repentance will avert His chastisement (cf. Lev26:40-42).
- [14] This verse is a quote from Jonah 3:9. Not only will the chastisement of Israel be averted upon repentance, "blessing" would return to the nation. In the days of Joel, that meant crops would be renewed and famine dissipated following the locust plague; in the future Tribulation, it will mean that the LORD will fight on behalf of Israel against her enemies.
- [15] In contrast with Joel 2:1, this "blow[ing of] the trumpet in Zion" is for the purpose of "call[ing] as solemn assembly" (Cp., Num10:3); it is a call for national repentance.
- [16] The call for national repentance is all-encompassing; no citizen of Israel is exempted (i.e., even nursing babies are included), and no other activity takes precedence (i.e., even weddings are to be interrupted).
- [17] The "priests" are expected to lead the nation in repentance, "weep[ing] between the porch and the altar" (which presumes the existence and operation of the Temple, undefiled, in the first half of the Tribulation). Their appeal is that the land of Israel is the LORD's "heritage", promised forever to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen15:18-21), and it should not be given over to

the Gentiles (Cp., Luk21:24); for Gentiles to "rule over" Jehovah's own people gives them an occasion to mock the "God" of Israel (Cp., Num14:15-16).

- [18] "Then" presumes Israel's repentance (vv15-17), at which time "the LORD" will be "jealous for his land" and "pity his people". Hosea prophesied of a time when the LORD would "no more have mercy upon the house of Israel", for "ye are not my people, and I will not be your God" (Hos1:6,9); that period of time will come to an end when the nation of Israel repents and returns to the LORD during the Tribulation.
- [19] Upon repentance, the LORD's blessing will return to the nation of Israel as promised under the Mosaic Covenant (Lev26:3-13; Deut28:1-14). Restoration of the "grain", "wine", and "oil" destroyed by the locust plague would be the blessing for Joel's generation, whereas the defeat of Israel's enemies will be the result for the generation of Israel in the Tribulation (v20).
- [20] The LORD will spare only one-sixth of the invading army (Ezek39:2), with the survivors being driven "far away" into the "barren and desolate" reaches of the extreme north. After the battle, "stink" and "ill savor" of the vast multitude of dead bodies will be overwhelming (Cp., Ezek39:11).

Geographical Identifications. There are a number of very important geographical descriptions in this verse that are often misidentified by commentators; most err in thinking much too locally (relative to the land of Israel), whereas the context is said to be "**far off**". First, "the northern army" in the Hebrew text is literally *the northerner* (an adjective, which when used with the article becomes a substantive). It is not merely that the invading army approaches Israel from the north, but that his native land is in the north; "And thou shalt come from **thy place** out of the *uttermost parts of the north*" (Ezek38:15). The leader of "the northern army" is "Gog, of the land of Magog" (Ezek38:2); Magog is Russia. Relative to Russia, "a land barren and desolate" is Siberia. The "east sea" is the Pacific Ocean, and the "utmost sea" is the Arctic Ocean, which are the eastern and northern boundaries of Siberia.

- [21] The LORD's exhortation to Israel is to "Fear not", for "the LORD will do great things" on behalf of the nation.
- [22] Even the "beasts of the field", which did "groan" and "cry" because of effects from the locust plague (Joel1:18,20), should not fear this invading army.
- [23] The LORD's miraculous deliverance of Israel during this invasion results in the conversion of the nation (cf. Ezek39:25-29; Joel2:27-32). As a result, the LORD will provide "the former rain and the latter rain" necessary for agricultural production in the land of Israel (i.e., a promised blessing under the Mosaic Covenant; Deut11:13-14).
- [24] The LORD's blessing will result in abundant agricultural productivity in the land of Israel (Cp., Ezek34:26-27; Amos9:13-14).

- [25] Using the analogy from Joel 1:4, the LORD promises to "restore to [Israel] the years that the locust hath eaten"; that is, the agricultural production lost as a result of Israel being subject to the curses of the Mosaic Covenant for unfaithfulness (Deut28:38-42) will be recompensed by the LORD's blessing for future faithfulness (i.e., in the Millennial Kingdom).
- [26] In the Millennial Kingdom, the nation of Israel will enjoy abundant blessing, and they will rightly "praise the name of the LORD" as the source of it.
- [27] The conversion of the nation of Israel occurs as a result of the LORD's miraculous deliverance at the time of this invasion (cf. Ezek39:22,28), which takes place during the first half of the Tribulation (cf. "Timing of Ezekiel 38-39" in the NOTES ON EZEKIEL 38-39).

THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT FOR ISRAEL

With the conversion of Israel during the Tribulation come the long-awaited blessings of the New Covenant applied to the nation (cf. Deut30:1-10; Jer31:33-34; Ezek36:25-27; Act3:19-21).

- [28] "And it shall come to pass afterward" (i.e., after the conversion of the nation of Israel) that the LORD will "pour out [His] Spirit upon all flesh" (Cp., Isa32:15; 44:3; Ezek39:29; Zech12:10). In this context, "all flesh" relates to the wholly regenerate nation of Israel. As a result of this outpouring of the Spirit upon the nation, all converted Jews will "prophesy" (which was the ancient desire of Moses; Num11:29).
- [29] Under the Mosaic Covenant, the "Spirit" came upon only a select few (i.e., the prophets); but under the New Covenant, God will "pour out" His "Spirit" upon all. During the Church Age, this has resulted in the permanent indwelling Spirit for all believers (cf. Jn14:16-17; Eph1:13); after the conversion of Israel and the inauguration of the Kingdom, this blessing will be applied to the nation of Israel (cf. Ezek36:26-27).
- [30] As signs and "wonders" accompanied the first coming of Messiah and His offer of the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Matt9:32-35; 10:5-8; 12:38-40), so they will also accompany the second coming of Messiah and the reoffer of the Kingdom at the close of the Tribulation.
- [31] During the Tribulation, the "wonders" will be world-wide in scope, including the seal, trumpet, and vial judgments (Cp., Matt24:29; Luk21:25-26; Rev6:12-14). Whereas the Day of the LORD encompasses the entire 7-year Tribulation period, "the great and terrible day of the LORD" may refer specifically to the last three-and-a-half years (Cp., Mal4:5; Matt24:21).
- [32] Under the New Covenant, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered". This applies spiritually to all (Cp., Act2:21; Rom10:13), but it will also apply literally and physically to "the remnant" of Jews who endure to the end of the Tribulation and will be "delivered" from the Antichrist and his armies by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Isa63:1-6; Zech14:1-7; Matt24:13;

Rev19:11-21); that "deliverance" will be centered "in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem" as the place of the Lord's return (Zech14:4; Act1:11-12).

Quotation in Acts 2. The quotation of **Joel 2:28-32** by the Apostle Peter in **Acts 2:17-21** is the subject of considerable debate. In Acts 2:16, Peter introduces the quotation by saying "this is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel", which has led many to conclude that Peter indicated that some, or all, of this prophecy from Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. This is not the case, for several reasons. First, it is obvious that not all aspects of the quoted prophecy came to pass on the day of Pentecost (Cp., Isa61:1-2; Luk4:17-21). Second, Acts 2:16 is not the formula used by Peter in Acts to indicate fulfillment (Cp., Act1:16). Third, if this is a fulfillment, then Joel 2:28-32 is a prophecy concerning the birth of the Church, which contradicts Paul's assertion that the Church was a mystery (Eph3:1-10; Col1:25-27). Fourth, the context in the Book of Joel sets the fulfillment of this passage in the day of the LORD (cf. Joel2:1,11,31), which is the 70th week of Daniel 9:27. Rather, the Acts 2 quotation of Joel is an instance of an O.T. prophecy cited by a N.T. writer, not to indicate fulfillment, but to make an application because of certain similarities (see: 4 Categories of Prophetic Citation).

4 Categories of Prophetic Citation. In the context of prophetic fulfillment, N.T. writers cite O.T. scriptures in four different ways. The four categories of prophetic citation⁷, and their use by Biblical writers, are all illustrated in Matthew 2; they are:

1. Literal (Matt2:6; Mic5:2)
2. Literal *plus* typological (Matt2:15; Exod4:22; Ps89:27; Hos11:1)
3. Literal *plus* an application (Matt2:18; Jer31:15)
4. Literal *plus* a summation (Matt2:23; summation of many prophets)

Regardless of the literary device used, the purpose of prophecy is always to convey literal truth.

CHAPTER 3

SECOND HALF OF THE TRIBULATION

Joel 3 concerns the second half of the 7-year Tribulation period and its immediate aftermath, during which all Gentile nations of the world will be gathered against Israel for the Battle of Armageddon, they will be defeated and judged by the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming, after which He will establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth and personally reign from Jerusalem.

- [1] The LORD will "bring again" the Jews to "Judah and Jerusalem" from their "captivity". That He will do this "again" indicates this refers to the end-time regathering from all nations (Cp., Isa11:11-12), rather than their first regathering from Babylon. This will

⁷ This is a highly condensed summary from Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Vol. 1 (Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX: 2018) pp. 12-43.

take place "in those days" and "at that time" when the LORD pours out His Spirit on the regenerate nation of Israel (Joel2:28-32), which occurs during the latter part of the first half of the Tribulation. Thus, what follows is a description of events during the second half of the Tribulation.

- [2] It is the LORD who will "gather all nations" to Israel for the Battle of Armageddon (Cp., Zech14:1-3; Rev16:13-16; 19:11-19), specifically "the valley of Jehoshaphat" ("Jehoshaphat" means *the LORD judges*). This gathering of Gentile nations is for the purpose of judgment.

The LORD says that the nations are guilty of having "parted my land". The land of Israel has been divided by the Gentile nations several times since the Balfour declaration (1917) first set aside the land for a reconstituted nation of Israel, but this likely suggests that it will be done again during the events leading up to or beginning the Tribulation (e.g., yet another division of the land might be a concession made by Israel as part of its peace treaty with the Antichrist; cf. Dan11:39).

- [3] The Gentile nations have also been guilty of repeatedly scattering the Jews throughout the world (v2) and treating them despicably while in foreign lands; thus, the Gentile nations deserve to be judged by the LORD for these grievous sins against the ancient people of God (cf. Gen12:3).

- [4] "Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia" is used as representative of all the Gentile nations which have oppressed and persecuted the Jewish people for millennia. To these Gentile nations, the LORD asks the rhetorical question, "What have ye to do with me?" This question calls attention to the fact that it is with the nation of Israel alone that the LORD has entered into a binding relationship via a series of unconditional covenants (i.e., the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenants); God has committed Himself to preserving and blessing the nation of Israel, and He has done so with no other nation.

- [5] In plundering the treasures of the nation of Israel, the LORD says the Gentiles have "taken my silver and my gold". Furthermore, there has often been an idolatrous component to these thefts (cf. 1Sam5:1-2; 1Kgs15:18; 2Kgs12:18; Dan1:1-2; 5:1-4).

- [6] Mention of a "Grecian" slave trade, which included Jewish slaves, supports a late date (after the Babylonian exile) for the composition of the Book of Joel.

- [7] The LORD promises not only to return the Jewish exiles/slaves to the land of Israel, but also to judge the Gentile nations for their mistreatment of the Jews.

- [8] The judgment of the Gentiles will include fitting recompense for their sins against the Jews; this is consistent with the LORD's ancient promise to execute vengeance upon the enemies of Israel (Gen12:3; Deut32:35).

- [9] It is the LORD who summons "all the men of war" of the "Gentiles" to "war" at the Battle of Armageddon, which is part of the 6th vial judgment during the second half of the Tribulation (cf. Rev16:12-16)

- [10] This is the opposite of what will happen at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Cp., Isa2:4). Whereas the Millennial Kingdom will be a time of universal peace, the second half of the Tribulation will be a time of universal war.
- [11] Actively involved in this final war will be the LORD's "mighty ones" (i.e., the angelic host of heaven; cf. Dan12:1; Rev12:7-9).
- [12] The "Valley of Jehoshaphat" is the Kidron Valley, which lies between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. This is not the same as the Valley of Megiddo (2Chron35:22), where the Battle of Armageddon is centered (Rev16:16). However, all the Gentiles who survive to the end of the Tribulation will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., the Sheep and Goat Judgment; Matt25:31-46); only saved Gentiles will be permitted to enter the Millennial Kingdom⁸. Apparently the Sheep and Goat Judgment takes place in the "Valley of Jehoshaphat".
- [13] The "harvest" is often used symbolically for the judgment that will take place at the end of the age when the second coming of Christ occurs (e.g., Matt13:36-39; Rev14:14-19). The emphasis that the "harvest is ripe", the "press is full", and the "vats overflow" all speak to the fact that the time for judgment of the Gentile nations has arrived, "for their wickedness is great" (Cp., Gen15:16).
- [14] The "valley of decision" is used for the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the place of the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt25:31-46), the final act of the series of divine judgments that occur during "the day of the LORD" (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation; Dan9:27). The "multitudes" judged include the entire Gentile population alive on earth at the second coming of Christ.
- [15] These are signs and wonders consistently prophesied to be associated with the divine judgments that occur during the Tribulation (Cp., Isa13:9-10; Ezek32:7-8; Matt24:29; Luk21:25; Rev6:12-13; 8:12).
- [16] The second coming of Christ is described as a "roar[ing] out of Zion" (Cp., Amos1:2), consistent with the symbolism of Messiah as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" in the Book of Revelation (Rev5:5). The destruction of the armies that have come against Israel will occur at the "utter [of] his voice" (Rev19:15). The "strength" and "hope" of "the children of Israel" is "the LORD" alone.
- [17] The Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation period; Dan9:27) ends with a totally regenerate nation of Israel acknowledging "the LORD" as their "God", and "the LORD" in the Person of Jesus Christ personally "dwelling in Zion" (i.e., Jerusalem). Furthermore, "there shall no more strangers pass through her any more", meaning that the "times of the Gentiles", during which "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles", will be "fulfilled" (Luk21:24; Cp., Dan2:31-35; 7:1-14).

⁸ There is no analogous judgment of Jews, since no unbelieving Jews will survive to the end of the Tribulation (cf. Ezek20:33-38; Zech13:8-9; Rom11:26).

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM BEGINS

Following the second coming of Christ to destroy the armies of the world at Armageddon and the subsequent judgment of all surviving Gentiles, the one-thousand year Messianic (Millennial) Kingdom will begin on this present earth.

- [18] Here, "in that day" refers to the Millennial Kingdom. The language is figurative, but it presents a land of Israel that has been radically changed and restored to its original fruitfulness and productivity (Cp., Num13:21-27). While the state of Israel is extremely productive today, agricultural production has only been accomplished by the extraordinary application of modern technology; for instance, almost half of the water used for irrigation comes from desalinated sea water, and even so much of the land of Israel remains uncultivated because there is not an adequate supply of water to do so. This is not what the Bible has in view when it prophesies of the agricultural productivity of the restored nation of Israel. Note that "the house of the LORD" refers to a Millennial Temple to be built by Messiah during His Kingdom reign (Zech6:12-13; cf. Ezek40:1-47:12).
- [19] Egypt and Edom (the modern state of Jordan) have been ancient enemies of Israel, have repeatedly attacked the modern state of Israel, and the "king of the south" that attacks Israel during the Tribulation is likely a reference to Egypt (Dan11:40). As a judgment against their many sins against Israel, these nations will suffer "desolation" during the Kingdom Age. All descendants of Esau (i.e., Edom) will be utterly cut off (Obad10,15-18), such that they will have no representatives in the Kingdom. The land of Egypt will be desolate and uninhabited for the first forty years of the Kingdom Age, after which it will be repopulated with believing Egyptians who had been scattered among other nations until that time (Ezek29:8-14); notwithstanding, it will not be permitted to be a nation of prominence during the Kingdom Age (cf. Ezek29:15).
- [20] In contrast to the Gentiles, "Judah" and "Jerusalem" will be head of the nations in the Kingdom Age (Deut26:19; 28:1), fulfilling the unconditional promises the LORD made to Abraham (Gen12:2; 13:15; 15:18-21).
- [21] Ultimately, the LORD will "avenge [the] blood" of all His people (the Jews) shed at the hands of the Gentiles (cf. Gen12:3; Deut32:35; Rev6:9-12; 18:20-24), which will affect not only the eternal destiny of individual Gentiles but also their national representation and place in the Kingdom Age. During the Kingdom Age, "the LORD dwelleth in Zion" in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ reigning from Jerusalem as "king over all the earth" (Zech14:9).

--- S.D.G. ---

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