

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The book is named after the man whose prophecies it bears. Joel, Heb. *Yo'el*, probably means, "Yahweh is God."

2. Authorship. We know nothing of Joel beyond what is revealed in his book. His father was Pethuel, for which the LXX reads *Bathouēl* (ch. 1:1), but who Pethuel, or *Bathouēl*, was we do not know. Joel seems to have been a native of Judah. His prophetic mission concerned Judah and Jerusalem (chs. 2:1, 15; 3:1, 6, 18, 20, 21). Throughout his prophecy there is no mention of Israel.

3. Historical Setting. Joel himself tells us nothing about the time of his writing. He does not, as is true of many other prophets (see Isa. 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1; etc.), state under what king or kings he prophesied. It is necessary, therefore, to depend upon the internal evidence of the book to establish the date. Nothing certain can be inferred from the position of the book in the canon, for we cannot be sure that the books are arranged in exact chronological order. In the Hebrew the book stands as it does in the English, between Hosea and Amos. In the LXX it stands fourth in the list of the so-called Minor Prophets, being placed after Micah, which there stands third. Some consider Joel to have been the earliest of the major and minor prophets; others regard him as postexilic. A third view places Joel in the 7th century, in the early years of Josiah. For a summary of the arguments for these different dates see pp. 20, 21. Though no date can be proved conclusively, this commentary has adopted the 7th century date for reasons listed on pp. 20, 21.

Joel occupies a high place among Hebrew prophets and has been classed with Isaiah and Habakkuk in sublimity and elevation of style. He is noted for his vividness of description and picturesqueness of diction. His style is pure and clear.

4. Theme. The book is divided into two parts: (1) chs. 1:1 to 2:17, a description of a terrible "locust" invasion (see on ch. 1:4), apparently accompanied by a drought; and (2) chs. 2:18 to 3:21, the promise of restoration to divine favor. Two interpretations have been given to the description of the "locust" plague: (1) the literal, which regards actual swarms of invading locusts as the basis of the prophet's appeal; and (2) the allegorical, which views "locusts" as a metaphorical representation of the invasion of hostile armies. In general, the literal view seems to have more in its favor (see on ch. 1:4).

Whichever view is adopted, the teachings of the book remain materially unchanged. The national disaster, whether actual or in figurative description, is made the basis of an earnest appeal to repentance (chs. 1:13, 14; 2:1, 12–17), and of a dissertation on the "day of the Lord" (chs. 1:15; 2:1, 2, 11, 31; 3:14). The vision of future glory sees the Jews established in their land, with that land restored to productiveness, enjoying Heaven's favor both temporally and spiritually. It sees further the opposition that would be aroused, and the attempt of enemy nations to crush the thriving nation, and finally God's judgment upon these enemies and the subsequent continued prosperity of the Jewish nation.

In applying the eschatological teachings of the book the principles outlined on pp. 25–38 should be observed (see on chs. 2:18; 3:1, 18).

5. Outline.

- I. The Plague of Locusts and the Call to Repentance, 1:1 to 2:17.
 - A. The frightful devastation of the plague, 1:1–12.

- B. The call to prayer and solemn assembly, 1:13, 14.
- C. The effect of the plague on man and beast, 1:15–19.
- D. The drought accompanying the plague, 1:20.
- E. The day of the Lord, 2:1, 2.
- F. The locusts compared to a well-disciplined army, 2:3–11.
- G. The call to genuine repentance and to prayer, 2:12–17.
- II. The Promise of Restoration, 2:18 to 3:21.
- A. The removal of the locust army, 2:18–20.
- B. Reparation for locust damage, 2:21–27.
- C. The promise of the Holy Spirit, 2:28, 29.
- D. Physical signs accompanying the day of the Lord, 2:30–32.
- E. Jehovah's judgment upon the heathen nations, 3:1–17.
- F. Judah's bright future, 3:18–21.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Joel, declaring sundry judgments of God, exhorteth to observe them, 8 and to mourn. 14 He prescribeth a fast for complaint.*

1. Word of the Lord. Joel assures the reader that his message did not originate with himself. His words were those of the Lord. He claims divine inspiration, as did other prophets (Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1; etc.; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

Joel. The name probably means, “Yahweh is God.” The Bible mentions several who bore this name (1 Sam. 8:2; 1 Chron. 7:3; 11:38; 15:7, 11). The prophet is distinguished as the son of Pethuel. Of Pethuel nothing further is known. The LXX reading, *Bathouēl*, sheds no light.

2. Hath this been? The calamity is something new in the memory of living men. It was unheard of by the fathers, and something to tell future generations about. The plague of locusts God brought upon Egypt through Moses was likewise described as an unprecedented event (Ex. 10:6). In five generations no other such calamity had been, or would be, known. By this effective device Joel stresses the unusual significance of his message.

3. Their children. Compare Ps. 78:4–7.

4. Palmerworm. Heb. *gazam*, from a root meaning “to cut,” hence thought to represent a cutting locust (see RSV).

Locust. Heb. *'arbeh*, thought to represent the swarming, or migratory, locust. The locusts that plagued the Egyptians are identified as the *'arbeh* (Ex. 10:4–19).

Cankerworm. Heb. *yeleq*, thought to represent the creeping, unwinged stage of the locust.

Caterpillar. Heb. *chasil*. This insect cannot be positively identified. *Chasil* comes from a root meaning “to devour,” hence the RSV translation, “destroying locust.” Some scholars have held that *gazam*, *'arbeh*, *yeleq*, *chasil*, are four terms that designate the four stages of the locust, from the worm to the mature insect. However, this cannot be established.

In general, two views have been held with regard to this description of the plague of locusts: (1) The literal view, which holds that Joel is describing a particularly devastating

scourge of locusts, and that the prophet makes this disaster the occasion of a call to repentance; the deliverance from the natural scourge is then made an occasion for a discourse on the future day of the Lord, when God's people will be delivered from all their enemies. (2) The allegorical view, which holds that the description of the plague was merely a figure of coming judgments. For example, in the time of Jerome the four destructive insects were taken as symbols of (a) the Babylonians and Assyrians, (b) the Medes and Persians, (c) the Macedonians and Antiochus Epiphanes, (d) the Romans. No serious Bible student accepts this view today.

Inasmuch as locust infestations were rather common occurrences in Palestine, it would be difficult to prove that one such plague may not have formed the occasion of Joel's prophecy. The arguments that have been presented against this view, such as the fact that the habits of the locust are not accurately described, tend to fall down when it is remembered that the language is highly figurative and poetical. On the other hand, it is impossible to prove that Joel was not employing the description of the insect infestation merely as a figure to represent the invasion of hostile armies (see pp. 937, 938).

Whichever interpretation is adopted, the eschatological teachings of the book remain the same. Joel is focusing on the great day of the Lord, and on Israel's deliverance in that day, if the nation had fully cooperated with God. But Israel failed to do so. Inspired writers show how the prophetic messages that failed of fulfillment because of Israel's unbelief, are to be fulfilled in the Christian age (see pp. 35, 36).

5. Drunkards. Poetically the winebibbers are called upon to mourn their fate. Deprived of the means of their favorite indulgence, they are urged to arouse from their stupor to shed the tears of disappointment.

6. Nation. Heb. *goy*. Compare Prov. 30:25, 26, where the lower creatures are spoken of as "people" and as "folk" (Heb. *'am* in both cases). This passage in Joel seems to be the only place in the Scriptures where lower creatures are referred to as a nation. It is possible that the reality here breaks through the figure and that the prophet is envisioning a hostile invading army.

7. My vine. Compare Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1–7; Hosea 9:10; 10:1.

Waste. After the locusts attack all that is green and succulent, they attack the bark of trees.

Barked. Literally, "reduced to a stump."

8. Husband of her youth. Doubtless one to whom the maiden is betrothed and whom she sincerely loves, but who dies before they are married. Instead of a wedding dress she puts on the rough sackcloth garment of mourning. Under Mosaic law a betrothal was, in its general aspects, considered to be as binding as a marriage (see on Deut. 22:23; Matt. 1:18–20).

9. Meat offering. Or, "meal offering," "cereal offering." On the nature of this offering see on Lev. 2:1. A share of these offerings was for the livelihood of the priests (Lev. 2:3; 6:16; 10:12–15).

10. Land mourneth. By the figure of personification the land is presented as mourning its unproductiveness. The Hebrew of this verse displays several interesting alliterations, which cannot be reproduced in the English.

11. Wheat. Wheat, barley, spelt, and millet were the principal cereal crops of Palestine.

12. Pomegranate. The enumeration of the effects of the drought (v. 20) on the various plants and trees is doubtless to emphasize its severity. The language of vs. 10–12 also fittingly describes the effects of the fourth of the seven last plagues (Rev. 16:8, 9; cf. GC 628).

13. Gird yourselves. That is, with sackcloth, normally a symbol of mourning (see v. 8), here of penitence, which Israel should display (see 1 Kings 21:27).

Ministers. From the Heb. *sharath*, “to serve.” The word is here used synonymously with “priests.”

14. Sanctify. Heb. *qadash*, “to consecrate,” “to dedicate,” here probably in the sense of consecrating with religious rites or at least with official proclamation.

Solemn assembly. Heb. *‘aşarah*, from the root *‘aşar*, “to detain,” “to restrain,” here in the sense of causing all work to cease for the purpose of calling an assembly.

15. Day of the Lord. A common expression with the prophets (Isa. 2:12; 13:6; Eze. 30:3; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14; etc.). For the significance of the expression see on Isa. 13:6. Primarily, Joel is referring to the impending judgments upon Judah. In principle his predictions apply also to the final day of judgment to come upon the world (see pp. 37, 38).

Almighty. Heb. *Shaddai* (see Vol. I, p. 171).

16. Meat. Heb. *’okel*, food of any kind.

From the house. Inasmuch as crops were destroyed, no first fruits or thank offerings could be presented in the Temple. When the Hebrews of old brought these and other offerings to the Lord, it was a time of rejoicing (see Deut. 12:5–7). The plague put an end to this joy.

17. The seed is rotten. The Hebrew of the first sentence of this verse is uncertain. The words here translated “seed,” “rotten,” and “clods” all appear only this once in the OT, and their meaning is obscure. Instead of “seed” some think “dried figs” should be read; others, “watercourses.” The word for “is rotten,” *‘abash*, if it is to be compared with the Arabic *‘abisa*, means “to shrivel.” For “clods” some read “shovels.” The LXX supports none of these suggestions. It reads, “the heifers leap at their mangers.” But this leaves the passage no less obscure.

18. Beasts groan. The effect of the insect infestation and the drought upon the animal kingdom is here shown.

19. O Lord. Apparently an outburst by the prophet, owing to the intense hardship and suffering caused by the insect visitation and the drought.

Fire. The fire and flame are probably figurative of the scorching heat of the sun.

20. The beasts. See on v. 18.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10–12GC 628

12 PK 538

12, 15–18Ed 180; PK 726; 9T 15

15–18PK 537

17–20GC 628

CHAPTER 2

1 *He sheweth unto Zion the terribleness of God's judgment.* 12 *He exhorteth to repentance,* 15 *prescribeth a fast,* 18 *promiseth a blessing thereon.* 21 *He comforteth Zion with present,* 28 *and future blessings.*

1. Blow. Verses 1–11 give a further description of the disaster caused by the “locusts” (see on ch. 1:4), and of the appearance of them” (ch. 2:4).

Trumpet. Heb. *shophar*, an instrument made of a ram's horn, used for signaling (see Vol. III, p. 39).

Zion. The name was applied both to Jerusalem and to the mountain upon which Jerusalem was situated (see on Ps. 48:2).

Day of the Lord. See on ch. 1:15.

In view of the fact that the great day of the Lord is hastening on apace and but few precious moments of probation remain, it behooves the church of God to rouse from its spiritual lethargy and seek repentance and humiliation. There are many in Zion who are satisfied with their spiritual attainments. They feel “rich, and increased with goods,” and in “need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). Others who feel a need are either too lethargic to effect a change or else expect that the lack will be supplied in the time of the latter rain (see TM 507). All such need to be aroused by the trumpet blast from Zion's watchman. Now, while the day of grace lingers, is the time to make thorough work of repentance, to cleanse the soul of every defilement, and to permit the full work of grace upon the heart. See further on v. 14.

2. A day of darkness. The language may be understood either figuratively, of adversity and despair, or literally, of the darkness caused by the plague of locusts, such as had come upon Egypt (Ex. 10:15). An actual darkening of the sun is mentioned in Joel 2:31.

Morning. Heb. *shachar*, “the reddish light preceding the dawn.” By a change of vowels to *shechor* the RSV reads “darkness.” Either figure appropriately describes the invading “locust” army spreading itself over the countryside.

A great people. See on ch. 1:6.

Not bee ever. See on ch. 1:2.

3. A fire. A locust invasion leaves the ground appearing as though it has been burned over.

Garden of Eden. A symbol of fruitfulness (Gen. 2:8).

4. Horses. Locusts resemble horses in the shape of the head. See Rev. 9:7, where onrushing cavalry are described under the figure of locusts.

Horsemen. Heb. *parashim*, a word also designating riding horses (“war horses,” RSV). In rapidity of motion, locusts are like running horses. See on Ex. 10:4–15.

5. Chariots. See on v. 4. Compare Rev. 9:9. The sound of the advancing locust horde is described under the figure of the noise of moving chariots.

Fire that devoureth. This was the noise made when the locusts alighted and devoured every green thing.

6. Blackness. Heb. *pa'rur*, according to some authorities, “a glow,” such as might be seen upon the face in excitement. Others think the terror caused by the locusts withdraws the glow from the face, leaving paleness there (see RSV). The idea of blackness connects

pa'rur with *parur*, “a cooking pot,” which is black from the soot collected upon it. The LXX reads, “every face as the blackness of a pot.”

7. Men of war. The locusts are compared to a well-disciplined army overcoming all obstacles (see Prov. 30:27).

8. Thrust another. The clause reads literally, “and each will not crowd his brother.”

Fall upon the sword. Or, “plunge upon [or through] the javelin.” No weapon used against them harms them. It is impossible to stay their progress.

9. Run to and fro. Heb. *shaqaq*, “to rush upon.” The clause would be better translated, “They rush upon the city.”

At the windows. The windows of ancient houses were unglazed, and hence presented no impediment to the invading locusts.

10. Earth shall quake. This verse should be understood in connection with v. 11. It describes the physical phenomena accompanying the day of the Lord. The conditions here portrayed could not have been produced by the locust army unless the language was intended to be highly hyperbolic. The vivid description of the insect invasion served only as an illustration of the judgments to come upon Judah in the day of the Lord (see on ch. 1:4, 15).

The sun and the moon. Compare Isa. 13:9–11; Amos 8:9. Jesus showed how these physical phenomena would be displayed in connection with the final day of the Lord (Matt. 24:29, 30). Joel was focusing on the great day of the Lord as it might have been fulfilled with respect to the nation of Israel (see on Joel 1:4). Jesus was showing how the great day of the Lord will come, now that the purpose of God are being accomplished through the church (see pp. 35, 36).

11. His army. The interpretation of the “locust” plague depends in part upon the date that is assigned to the book of Joel (see p. 937). If it is assumed that the book was written in the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22; 23:1–30), it is possible to see in the vivid description of the plague a forecast of the Babylonian invasion, of which Hezekiah had already been warned (2 Kings 20:16–18). Joel would then be contemporaneous with Habakkuk and Zephaniah, who also warned of the threatened invasion (Hab. 1:6; Zeph. 1). Zephaniah’s description of the day of the Lord and his call to repentance closely parallel those of Joel (Zeph. 1:14, 15; 2:1–3).

The phrase “his army” may be compared with Jeremiah’s statement concerning Babylon, “Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (Jer. 51:20).

12. Turn. Heb. *shub*, better, “turn back,” or, “return.”

All your heart. Compare Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:11–14. Only genuine repentance could avert the threatened judgments.

13. Rend your heart. For a Jew to rend his garment was a sign of great grief. It signified that he had encountered some terrible calamity (Gen. 37:34; Lev. 13:45; 2 Chron. 34:27; Jer. 36:24). Since, however, it was possible to exhibit such external signs of grief without any real inward feeling of sorrow, the people were commanded to avoid such pretense by rending, instead, their hearts.

Gracious and merciful. See Ex. 34:6, 7; Neh. 9:17.

Repenteth him. On God’s repenting see on Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; see also PP 630. The discipline of the judgments would be unnecessary if the requisite change in character

were wrought (see Jer. 26:3; Jonah 4:2). Prayer does not change the mind of God. With Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). But prayer changes the petitioner (see on Dan. 10:13). When the conditions of answered prayer are met, God can bestow rich blessings.

14. Who knoweth? It is God who determines whether discipline is necessary. The penitent may rest assured that if, despite his change of heart, discipline follows, the chastisement will work for his good (see Heb. 12:5–11).

In view of the great and terrible day of the Lord now soon to burst upon a doomed world, Joel’s call to repentance has not diminished its force (see GC 311; 6T 408, 409). The call has a twofold application: for the worldling it is an appeal to forsake folly and sin and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, the only means of salvation offered to men (Acts 4:12); for the lukewarm professor of religion (Rev. 3:16) it is an appeal to awake from spiritual lethargy and to make certain of salvation. See further on v. 1.

15. Trumpet. See on v. 1.

16. People. These various classes are enumerated to show the universality of the appeal.

17. The porch. The vestibule at the entrance of the Temple (see on 1 Kings 6:3). The brazen altar for burnt offerings stood in the court in front of the porch (see 2 Chron. 8:12; see on 1 Kings 8:64). The place of meeting was thus directly at the entrance to the Temple.

Thine heritage. Compare the appeal in Ex. 32:12; Deut. 9:26, 29; also Eze. 36:20–23.

18. Then will the Lord. The clause reads literally, “Then Yahweh became jealous.” It is assumed that the repentance enjoined had taken place. Verses 18–32 constitute God’s merciful response to the urgent appeal of the priests in the preceding verse. The promises were conditional, and because the Israelites never wholeheartedly responded to Joel’s appeal, those promises were never fulfilled for them. However, certain features of the promises will be fulfilled in principle in connection with the Christian church (see pp. 35, 36).

19. Lord will answer. Literally, “Yahweh answered” (see on v. 18).

Corn, and wine, and oil. That which the locusts had destroyed would be restored (see ch. 1:10).

20. Northern army. Locusts have been reported occasionally entering Palestine from the northeast, though more generally they come from the arid regions to the south of Judah. Here the north is obviously selected because many of Judah’s enemies entered Palestine from the north. The locust invasion, though probably real, was presumably also a figure of the invasion of hostile armies (see on ch. 1:4). Some who hold to an early date for Joel (see p. 21) see a reference here to the Assyrians. Those who hold to a date in the time of Josiah see a reference to the Babylonians (see Jer. 1:14; 4:6). The devastation caused by the Babylonians might have been averted by sincere repentance and reform (see p. 31).

Drive him. A vivid description of the speedy and total destruction of the locusts.

With his face. The Hebrews frequently designated directions of the compass, from the standpoint of facing east. Thus the west would be behind them, the south on the right hand, and the north on the left.

East sea. The Dead Sea.

Utmost sea. That is, the Mediterranean.

His stink. Observers have noted the sickening stench arising from the putrefying bodies of masses of locusts.

He hath done. That is, the locust army in its destructiveness.

21. Fear not. Previously the land had mourned (ch. 1:10).

Great things. The locusts had done great things in destruction; God would do great things in deliverance.

22. Ye beasts. The animals that had endured great distress for lack of food are now called upon to rejoice, for the pastures, and with them the trees, yield a plentiful sustenance.

23. Be glad. In its primary application this verse refers to the restoration of adequate rainfall. The former rain fell in the autumn and promoted germination; the latter rain fell in the spring and helped to bring the grain crops to maturity (see Vol. II, p. 109). In their application to the Christian church the rains represent the work of the Holy Spirit (TM 506; see the following).

Former rain. Heb. *moreh*, literally, “teacher,” and so translated in Prov. 5:13; Isa. 30:20. *Moreh* comes from the root *yarah*, which means “to direct,” “to teach,” “to instruct.” *Yarah* is also the root of *torah*, the word commonly translated “law” in the OT (see on Prov. 3:1). Many scholars prefer the translation “teacher” here, whereas others think that the context requires “former rain.” The Hebrew for “former rain” is *yoreh* (from the root *rawah*, “to saturate”), and not *moreh*, unless this verse in Joel is an exception. See further under the next comment.

Moderately. Heb. *lišedaqah*, literally, “with respect to righteousness,” or, “for righteousness.” The word for “righteousness” (*šedaqah*) occurs more than 150 times in the OT, but nowhere in the sense of “moderately,” as we commonly understand that word, unless this is the exception. Consequently, various meanings have been given to the phrase translated, “the former rain moderately.” The RSV reads, “the early rain for your vindication”; others, “rain for righteousness,” “rain for justification,” or “early rain as His righteousness prompts Him to give it.” On the other hand, if “teacher” be read instead of “former rain” (see the foregoing under “Former rain”), as in the Targums and the Vulgate, then “righteousness” can be given its usual meaning and the clause may be rendered, “the teacher of righteousness.” Some of the Jewish commentators saw a reference here to the Messiah. Christian commentators have variously referred the “teacher” to Joel, an ideal teacher, the Messiah, the instruction of Moses and the prophets, etc.

Some Adventist expositors, in making an application of this verse to the Christian church, have attached special significance to the literal reading, “the teacher of righteousness.” Inasmuch as the time of the latter rain is also the time of the “loud cry” (see GC 611; cf. EW 71), they have applied the clause, “the teacher of righteousness,” to the message of the righteousness of Christ to be given special prominence at this time. “The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel” (6T 19; cf. TM 89–94).

The rain. Heb. *geshem*, frequently denoting a violent shower, or a downpour.

The former rain, and the latter rain. The word here translated “former rain” is *moreh*, as above. However, 34 Hebrew manuscripts here read *yoreh*, the common word for “former rain.” It is evident that the literal “former rain,” or “early rain,” is here intended.

In its figurative application to the Christian church the early rain represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, whereas the latter rain represents the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which produces “the ripening of the harvest” (GC 611; cf. AA 54, 55). “The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening” (GC 611).

The figures of the early and latter rains have reference also to individual Christian experience. “The Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God’s grace in the soul” (TM 506). Unless the early rain has done its work the latter rain will prove ineffective. Those who wish to share in the “refreshing” must “obtain the victory over every besetment” (EW 71).

The latter rain gives “power to the loud voice of the third angel” (EW 86) and prepares “the church for the coming of the Son of man” (AA 55). It prepares “the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out” (EW 86). It emboldens the honesthearted to accept the truth (EW 271).

24. Floors. Heb. *goranoth*, “threshing floors.” Verses 24–27 portray the wholesome effects of the abundant rain on the parched and barren ground. Verse 24 affords a striking contrast to ch. 1:10–12.

Fats. Heb. *yeqabim*, “wine presses.”

25. Restore ... the years. Compare ch. 1:4. In like manner the future rewards will amply compensate for all earth’s sorrows and trials (see Rom. 8:18; EW 17).

26. Eat in plenty. A striking contrast to the earlier conditions (ch. 1:16, 17).

Praise. A spirit of praise and gratitude would characterized those privileged to share in the restoration, a praise, not of themselves, but of God, who had wrought such marvelous deliverance. The anthems of heaven resound with praise and gratitude to God (see Rev. 7:11, 12; cf. Rev. 5:13).

27. Ye shall know. The wondrous workings of God in the restoration of Israel would give evidence to those who had been tempted to believe that God had forsaken His people, that God was indeed working for their good. Even in the plague God had overruled for purposes of mercy to bring about a much-needed repentance and reform. Some had interpreted the successes of the enemy as evidence that the gods of the heathen were more powerful than Jehovah. With Israel victorious over her foes, all would know that Jehovah was indeed God and “none else.”

28. Afterward. Heb. *’achare-ken*, “after this.” The phrase is indefinite as to time. It was God’s plan to bestow upon the restored state of Israel the spiritual blessings here described (see on Eze. 39:29). Because of the failure of the people, and the consequent rejection of the Jewish nation (see p. 33), the promises were not fulfilled to literal Israel. These promises were transferred to spiritual Israel. Peter identified the events on the day of Pentecost as a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16–21). Instead of “afterward” Peter used the phrase “in the last days” (v. 17).

Upon all flesh. This though is further emphasized by the enumeration of the various age groups that would share the spiritual blessings; further, by the fact that bond and free alike would receive the Spirit. The context makes clear that more than the reception of the Spirit, such as accompanies conversion and works transformation of life, is here spoken of. This special pouring out of the Spirit results in the display of supernatural gifts, such as prophesying. On the day of Pentecost, when the apostles “were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4), Peter asserted that “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (v. 16).

In the early church “the manifestation of the Spirit” was given “to every man to profit withal” (1 Cor. 12:7). Various gifts were in evidence, such as “the word of wisdom,” “the word of knowledge,” “faith,” “healing,” “working of miracles,” “prophecy,” “discerning of spirits,” “divers kinds of tongues,” and “the interpretation of tongues” (vs. 8–10).

The events of Pentecost were but a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prediction. The prophecy is to “reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the gospel” (GC ix).

In the Hebrew Bible vs. 28–32 constitute ch. 3, and what is ch. 3 in the English Bible is ch. 4 in the Hebrew Bible.

Dream dreams. For a discussion of “dreams” and “visions” see on 1 Sam. 3:1; cf. Num. 12:6.

30. Wonders. On the and accompanying the second coming of Christ see Luke 21:25, 26; Rev. 6:12–17; 16:17–21.

31. Into darkness. On the fulfillment of this prediction before the second coming of Christ see on Matt. 24:29; see also GC 308.

Day of the Lord. See on ch. 1:15.

32. Whosoever shall call. It was God’s plan that by extensive missionary activities the remnant of Israel would carry a knowledge of the true God and of His salvation to the nations who knew Him not. Their failure transferred the task to the Christian church (see pp. 35, 36).

Remnant. Heb. *šeridim*, from the root *šarad*, “to run away,” hence “escapees,” “survivors.” The word is translated “remnant” only here and in Isa. 1:9. The more common OT word for remnant is from the root *sha’ar*, “to be left over,” “to remain.” The last clause may be translated, “and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls” (RSV).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 GC 311; RC 66; TM 410; 8T 195; WM 80

11 GC 310

12, 13 GC 311

12–146T 409

12–17PK 627

13 EW 119; MB 87; 1T 133; 2T 303; 5T 649

15–17GC 311; 1T 180; 6T 408

16 MH 404; 5T 505; 6T 19

17 Ev 641; PP 455; TM 143; 1T 130, 596; 2T 361, 709; 3T 234; 5T 166, 452, 517

23 AA 55; COL 121; DA 827; EW 71; GC 611, 613; TM 506; 8T 21

26 GC 350

27 6T 409
28 Ev 567, 700; GC ix; ML 62
28, 29 EW 78; GC 464
31 GC 308

CHAPTER 3

1 *God's judgments against the enemies of his people. 9 God will be known in his judgment. 18 His blessing upon the church.*

1. Bring again the captivity. This expression may describe a return from literal captivity or may be used metaphorically to describe a general return of prosperity (see on Ps. 14:7; see Introduction to Ps. 126). If the book of Joel was written shortly before the Babylonian captivity (see p. 21), there is probably a reference here to the return from that land. The expression is common in Jeremiah, and is thus applied (chs. 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7).

The description of the return is in terms of how the promises of God would have met fulfillment if the nation of Israel had cooperated with God (see pp. 27–30; see on Eze. 37:1). The prosperity of Israel would have excited the enmity of the nations, who are here represented as gathered by God into the valley of Jehoshaphat. The prediction parallels that of Eze. 38, where Gog and his bands are represented as brought against Jerusalem, and there judged (see Zech. 14:1–3). The application of this prophecy to the future must be made on the basis of the revelation of the NT (see on Eze. 38:1; see p. 30).

2. Valley of Jehoshaphat. The name occurs only here, but in the time of Eusebius (4th century) it was applied to the Kidron Valley, the depression between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem. However, there is no evidence that anciently the valley was ever thus called. The name seems to have been chosen because of its significance. Jehoshaphat meaning, “Yahweh has judged,” or “Yahweh judges.” See also GC 32.

Some have attempted to connect this valley with the Valley of Berachah, the scene of Judah's victory over the united forces of Ammon, Moab, and Mt. Seir (2 Chron. 20:1–30). However, that valley was in the wilderness of Tekoa (2 Chron. 20:20), a town 10 mi. (16 km.) south of Jerusalem, probably the *Wadi el-'Arrûb*, south of Tekoa. The distance of this site from Jerusalem seems to be against the equating of the Valley of Berachan with the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Will plead. Heb. *shaphat*, which, in the form here found, means “to enter into a legal controversy.” *Shaphat* the last part of the name Jehoshaphat.

A spiritually revived people of Israel, cooperating with God's plan, would have enjoyed the favor and protection of Heaven. The blessings promised at the time of the Exodus (Deut. 28:1–14) would have met belated fulfillment. The Jewish nation would have become a marvel of prosperity and would have converted multitudes to the true God. As the numbers increased, Israel would have enlarged its borders until it embraced the world (see COL 290). Naturally such a program would have excited the anger of the heathen nations. Under the leadership of Satan these nations would have banded together to crush the thriving state, and God would have intervened (see p. 30).

With the failure of the Jews, we look to the fulfillment of these predictions in principle in the Christian church (see on Eze. 38:1). The conflict here described will take on the nature of a desperate attempt by Satan, in earth's last hour, to destroy the true

church of God. “As he [Satan] influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God” (9T 231; cf. 5T 524; GC 656; 6T 18, 19, 395). Again God will intervene in behalf of His people, and at the second coming of Christ will destroy the wicked (Rev. 19:19–21), and 1,000 years later annihilate them (Rev. 20:9–15).

3. *Cast lots.* Distributing slaves by lot seems to have been a common practice in ancient warfare. Compare Obadiah 11; Nahum 3:10.

4. *What have ye to do?* Literally, “What are ye to me?” God identifies Himself with His people (see Matt. 10:40; 25:40, 45).

Tyre. Tyre and Sidon were two important cities of Phoenicia (see Vol. II, pp. 67–69; see on Eze. 26:2; 28:21).

Palestine. Literally, Philistia.

5. *Taken my silver.* God regarded the wealth of Israel as His.

6. *Have ye sold.* The Phoenicians and the Philistines were famous slave traders (see Eze. 27:13).

That ye might remove them. Here, perhaps, an expression of result. As a result of the slave traffic, carried on by the Phoenicians and Philistines, primarily for profit, the Jews had become widely dispersed.

7. *Raise.* Literally, “rouse,” “stir up.”

8. *Sabeans.* A people living in southwest Arabia who were famous as traders.

9. *Gentiles.* Heb. *goyim*, “nations.” Verses 9–17 return to the topic of v. 2. The subject is expanded and graphically portrayed. As noted in the comments on v. 2 the description of a literal conflict is in terms of how events would have evolved if the nation of Israel had fulfilled her God-given mission. Application to the last days must be made in terms of the information provided by later inspired writers who have shown how events that might have had a fulfillment in literal Israel will be fulfilled with respect to spiritual Israel (see on v. 2; see pp. 35, 36).

Prepare. Heb. *qadash*, literally, “to sanctify.” *Qadash* is thus translated in ch. 1:14 (see comments there).

Wake up. Heb. *ur*, “to rouse,” “to stir up.” For an application in principle to the stirring up of the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God see on v. 2. There will be another rousing of the wicked at the end of the millennium, when Satan “makes the weak strong, and inspires all with his own spirit and energy” to attack the New Jerusalem (GC 663; see on Isa. 24:22).

Adventist expositors have generally seen in this prophecy a forecast, not only of climactic events associated with the great day of the Lord, but also of international military activities in the final days of earth’s history. The gradual withdrawal of God’s Spirit in these last days leaves the way open for a corresponding increase in satanic activity designed to lead men on to destroy one another. This process will reach its climax just before the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven.

10. *Plowshares.* The economic and industrial forces of the nations were to be turned to purposes of war.

Strong. Heb. *gibbor*, “a mighty one,” “a warrior.”

11. *Gather yourselves.* For the conditional fulfillment to literal Israel see p. 30. For the fulfillment to spiritual Israel see on v. 2.

Round about. Literally, “from round about.” The phrase modifies heathen (Heb. *goyim*, “nations”), rather than “gather.”

Mighty ones. Heb. *gibborim*, which may be translated “warriors” (see on v. 10).

12. Heathen be wakened. See on v. 9.

Valley of Jehoshaphat. See on v. 2.

Judge. See p. 30; see on v. 2.

13. Harvest is ripe. Apparently two figures are used by which to describe the judgment upon the nations: (1) the reaping of the grain harvest, and (2) the gathering of the vintage and the treading of the grapes. Some think only one figure is intended, that the sickle represents the pruning knife, and that the harvest represents the garnering of the vintage, which came about September. Compare John’s picture of the harvest in Rev. 14:14–20.

Fats. Heb. *yeqabim*, “wine presses.”

14. Decision. Heb. *charuṣ*, a word with several possible definitions. The context must decide the choice of meaning in any particular instance. The root of *charuṣ* is *charaṣ*, which means “to decide,” “to determine,” “to settle,” “to fix.” *Charuṣ* may be the passive participle of *charaṣ*, and hence may mean “decision” in the sense that the fate of the wicked nations is being decided. It should be noted, however, that the “decision” here referred to is that of Jehovah as judge (see on vs. 2, 12), and not that of the people who are being judged. In other words, their probation has already closed. It is now “the day of the Lord” (see on Isa. 13:6). The LXX reads valley of “punishment,” or “vengeance.”

Charuṣ is also an adjective and a noun. As such it may mean “gold” (Ps. 68:13), “moat” (Dan. 9:25), “diligent” (Prov. 10:4), “having a cut” (translated “maimed,” Lev. 22:22), or “threshing instrument” (Job 41:30; Isa. 28:27). Of these definitions only “threshing instrument” fits the context. A number prefer this reading. The picture is then of a valley in which the wicked are being threshed.

The words of the phrase “valley of decision” have frequently been used to describe earth’s multitudes, the destinies of whose souls hang in the balance. Though the words may be borrowed and thus applied, it should be remembered that this is not the primary application of the text, the one intended by Inspiration.

15. Shall be darkened. On the physical signs that will accompany the day of the Lord see on ch. 2:10; cf. EW 41.

16. Roar out of Zion. Compare Amos 1:2; see on Eze. 38:18–23.

Shake. For the application of these prophecies to the future see on v. 2; cf. Rev. 16:17, 18; PP 341.

Hope. Heb. *machaseh*, “a refuge,” “a shelter.” Judgment upon the enemies of Judah means deliverance for the people of God. Thus it will be when the wicked powers of earth, under the influence of Satan, seek to destroy the faithful remnant (Rev. 13:15). God will intervene to deliver His people (see EW 272, 273).

17. Shall ye know. Because of the misfortunes that had befallen the Jewish nation, many had been led to question the merciful purposes of God. But the Lord declared that He would show forth His mighty power in the deliverance of His people. Thus His

character and beneficent design would be fully vindicated before the inhabitants of earth (see on Eze. 6:7; 38:23; cf. Eze. 39:22, 28).

Pass through her. That is, with evil designs. Strangers who had joined themselves to the Lord were, of course, welcome (Isa. 56:6). God's design was that with regularity "all flesh" would come to worship before Him (Isa. 66:23).

The picture is of the Jerusalem that might have been (see on Isa. 65:17). When the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:2), Satan and the vast host with him will seek to overrun the Holy City, but they will perish in the attempt (Rev. 20:9).

18. It shall come to pass. Verses 18–21 describe conditions that would have followed the judgment upon the enemies of Jerusalem if Israel had been faithful. The description parallels that presented in Eze. 40 to Eze. 48 and Zech. 14. Ultimately there was to have come the complete renovation of the earth (see on Isa. 65:17; Eze. 38:1; 40:1; see pp. 29, 30).

A fountain. See Eze. 47:1–12. See on Eze. 40:1 on principles of interpretation.

Valley of Shittim. Literally, "valley of acacias." There was a Shittim in Moab, opposite Jericho, where the children of Israel encamped before entering the land of Canaan (Num. 25:1; cf. Num. 22:1). It is doubtful, however, that this is the region here designated. A comparison with Eze. 47:1–12 suggest that this valley was possibly the Kidron with its wadies.

19. A desolation. See on v. 18.

For the violence. See p. 30.

20. For ever. The previous residence in Canaan, though designed to be permanent, was interrupted because of a failure of the people to cooperate with the program of Heaven. The people had built houses, but strangers dwelt in them. Now they were again offered the promise of permanence (see on Isa. 65:21). If the discipline of the Captivity had done its designed work, and the returning exiles had continued to carry out the divine objective, residence would have been permanent.

21. Cleanse. Heb. *naqah*, "to acquit," "to hold exempt from punishment." In the gospel plan such acquittal comes through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ (see on ch. 2:23).

¹

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

14 4T 446; 6T 406

16 DA 780; EW 15, 272, 285; PP 340, 341; 1T 184

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¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Joe 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Am 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.