

## MINOR PROPHETS

### Session\_3\_JOEL - Chapter 2:1-29

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In this transitional section of Joel's prophecy, a new and much more ominous event is prophesied. Things to keep in mind:

- At the time of the writing of Joel (approx. 835 B.C.-796 B.C.), the Assyrian invasion 722/721 B.C. (affecting the Northern kingdom), the Babylonian invasion 605/586 B.C. (Southern kingdom) had not yet taken place.
- The Roman invasion and final destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) = scattering to the nations; Not formed again till 2000 years later.
- It is not clear as to which exact invasion it is a reference to. The "near / far" aspect of prophecy has to be remembered and probably pertains to both.

While there is no amount of time specified between the warning of judgment and Israel's repentance, the response of God to their apparent repentance (beginning in v.18) seems to be linked to their final restoration:

- Phrases like "I will never again make you a reproach to the nations. (v19)" and "then My people will never be put to shame. (v26 & 27)".
- This response to their repentance includes promises of blessing on the land and the people - "when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,...(3:1)"
- As well as judgment on the nations - "I will gather all the nations...I will enter into judgment with them there...(3:2)".
- Another key is the actual presence of the Lord in Israel (2:27; 3:17)
- Along with the other blessings, Israel is described as "holy" (3:17).

**1) "Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,"**

The trumpet was synonymous with gathering the people for a special occasion or to warn of danger (Ex 19:13,16,19; 20:18; Nu 10:1-10; Is 27:13; Amos 3:6; Zep 1:14-16; Zec 9:14; 1Th 4:16). In Revelation - the trumpets are used to sound off judgments of the Lord. Notice the ownership here = "my holy mountain". This point of God's personal ownership of the land and His people is made repeatedly in Joel's prophecy. "it is near"... not necessarily referring to time, but to its certainty (God is not framed in by time).

### A Great Invasion

**2) "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations."**

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#### **A day of darkness and gloom...clouds and thick darkness.**

This was descriptive of the scene at the base of Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law (Ex.19&20) and other visitations of the Lord (Ex10:12; 24:16; Dt 4:12; 5:22,23) It also was common imagery associated with calamity and misery (Is 8:22; 60:2; Her 13:16; Am 5:18,20; Zep 1:15). Darkness is one of the physical judgments rendered on the beast and his followers:

*"The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish" [Rev 16:10 ESV]*

Darkness is the abode of all whose identity is this world and is the description of that spiritual condition:

*"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." [Jhn 3:19 ESV]*

*"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" [2Co 6:14 ESV]*

*"for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" [Eph 5:8 ESV]*

But God offers a chance to be brought into the light through His Son:

*"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." [Mat 4:15-16 ESV]*

*"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." [1Pe 2:9 ESV]*

Ultimately all of the Lord's enemies will be in permanent darkness:

*"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [Mat 8:11-12 ESV]*

At this point we see a major departure from the natural locust plague to a greater, more fearful invasion force. While history tells us about Assyria, Babylon and eventually Rome, there is a significant clue given here that actually rule all three out as the ultimate fulfillment while they serve as precursors. Notice what God says about this army "their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations." While Israel had faced many significant invasions and devastations after Joel's prophecy, there is yet a greater invasion force described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 to take place in the final days before Christ's return-Armageddon!

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#### A Description of the Army

**3-11) "Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale. Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?"**

Ezekiel profiles an invading force of many peoples to come up against Israel led by Gog and Magog just prior to the return of Christ. The terminology is very similar:

*"After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you. You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army. You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. "Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel." [Eze 38:8-9, 15-19 ESV]*

The details remaining in 38 and 39 do have direct correlation - especially in terms of the Lord dealing directly with the enemies of His people and in defense of His name! There are many opinions of what this invading force is. It could be Ezekiel 38 & 39, Dan. 11 and Isa. 10. It may be likened to the demonic locust hoard in Rev. 9. Joel may also have in view the collection of all peoples / events that have laid waste to Israel. All events would be allowed / used by God to judge His people and all will be avenged! The call for repentance will always go forth.

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#### A Fresh Call To Repentance

**12-14) "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?"**

This is the blessed heart of our great God! No superficial response wanted - "not your garments" = skip the outward appearance and be torn in your heart. So much so that it will effect your actions.

#### God Forgave Nineveh

*"The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." [Jon 3:6-10 ESV]*

True repentance exhibits obedience:

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." [Jhn 14:15 ESV]*

Jesus laid out the details of what is expected of His followers:

*"And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." [Luk 9:23 ESV]*

Yet the struggle with sin remains, even with the people of God. If He is willing to forgive a Pagan nation like Nineveh, how much more His people:

*"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." [2Ch 7:13-14 ESV]*

**15-17) "Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" "**

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This fresh call to repentance is like the call in chapter 1 and requires the attention of all of God's people; not even the consummation of a marriage is as important! Israel's history marks a failure in regards to a lasting repentance. The ultimate display of their rejection of God is in rejecting His Son! Even in their gathering again, it is for the purpose of God dealing with them in order to bring about their national repentance and restoration. This is detailed in Ezekiel 20:

*"As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. "As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols. "For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. "As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD. " " [Eze 20:33-44 ESV]*

### God Will Forgive and Deliver!

**18) "Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people."**

The text reminds us of the sovereignty of God. The land and the people are HIS! - No matter what any man, nation or fallen angel may think or feel. Just as the Lord reminded them that He chose them because of His name's sake (Deut 7), it is because of His name that He will restore. The reply and promise to restore here assumes that there will be a national repentance that brings about final restoration. Zechariah describes that national repentance:

*"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. " [Zec 12:10 ESV]*

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Jesus said to Israel “you will not see me standing here again until you say “blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:39)

**19-20) "The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. "I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things."**

The most important detail here is that this restoration is permanent = “I will no more make you a reproach among the nations” If the devastation of a great army in Israel’s future is to be directly tied to her restoration, it would seem to be the armies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 (not dogmatic in this text). Joel’s prophecy will continue to explain that the restoration of Israel is tied directly to the judgment of the nations and it will result in all of them acknowledging the Lord. This same alignment of events is a major theme of prophecy. Some examples of this are:

*"On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. " [Zec 12:8-9 ESV]*

In Ezekiel’s prophecy, speaking to Gog God says:

*"Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. " [Eze 39:3-7 ESV]*

**21-23) "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before."**

Joel now moves to speaking of the land blessing associated with this picture of final restoration.

A point of interest here: In his Messianic Bible Study collection (Vol. 74) A.G. Fruchtenbaum pointed out that “early rain for your vindication” could be translated differently; “rain” = moreh - by itself is rendered “teacher” and is a masculine noun. “for your vindication” = tse-dä-kä’ - means “righteousness”. So could be translated “a Teacher of righteousness” = Messiah

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**24-27) "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of**

Twice here the Lord again makes it clear that His people shall “never again be put to shame” Notice how this is associated with the fact that He is “in the midst of Israel” = Ezek. 8-11 gives in detail the Spirit’s departure from Israel. It begins with the Spirit leaving the inner temple, going out of the whole temple, and the city up into the clouds. Ezek. 43 depicts His return that will take place in the beginning of the Millennium with the restoration of Israel under the Messiah.

### God Will Pour Out His Spirit

**28-29) "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." [Joe 2:28-29 ESV]**

The use of the temporal term “afterward” indicates that this pouring out of the Spirit will come in sequence with the process of the restoration of Israel and just before the “great and awesome day of the Lord (v31)”. The context of the verse is “your sons and daughters”, “your old men”, “your young men” So in saying “all mankind” the whole passage is directed at all of Israel; Paul says in Romans 11:26 that “all Israel shall be saved” In the promise of the New Covenant, Jeremiah writes about the completeness and permanence of its application to the nation of Israel:

*"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." [Jer 31:31-34 ESV]*

He goes on to explain the certainty of this promise to the nation Israel:

*"Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD of hosts is his name: "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD." [Jer 31:35-37 ESV]*

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So the question then arises is there a conflict when Peter relates this part in Joel to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2?

In Malachi the promise of Elijah coming just before "the great and awesome day of the LORD comes" (4:5) was given. When Jesus was asked by John the Baptist from prison if He were the expected One or should they expect another He had His disciples tell John what they witnessed and that anyone who is not offended by Jesus is blessed. He went on to teach the crowds about John:

*"and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come." [Mat 11:14 ESV]*

Revelation records that there is indeed an expected return of Elijah as one of the two witnesses just before the return of Jesus (Rev 11). The author of Hebrews writes that "in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" yet there is still to come a final "last days" climax for the world. Some were resurrected to walk around Jerusalem at His resurrection (Matt 27:52,53) but this was not the whole resurrection - yet to come. While the first advent of the Messiah brought about the ratification of the New Covenant in Jesus' blood, its full application to the nation of Israel has not yet been fulfilled.

So there is no conflict for Peter to tie the events of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 to the promises concerning the Spirit. His activities in relationship to the New Covenant / beginnings of the church were important signs and precursors to the eventual pouring out of the Spirit on all Israel in His return.