

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **JOEL - TEETH IN THE WIND**

*(2<sup>nd</sup> edition – including charts & index)*

The book of the prophet Joel is a small book that packs a mighty big punch. Often it is misunderstood or only referred to for certain isolate verses. Yet when it is taken as a whole, Joel is crammed full of hidden treasure that exhorts, builds faith, keeps us watching and gives an insight into the future. The book witnesses to us that God’s prophecies truly come to pass by showing us the fulfillment of past prophecies with precise detail.

Yet the prophet Joel also speaks of prophecies with fulfillments yet to come, as well as giving details that enlarge our understanding of prophecies found other places in the Bible. The picture that emerges from the book of Joel of future conflicts and judgments is full of warning and hope for our generation, the last generation before our Lord’s return. May we take heed to the words of this prophecy so that we are ready with lamps burning to meet the bridegroom upon his return.

### **OVERVIEW:**

The text can be divided into either three or four chapters. The Hebrew Masoretic Text divides the book into four chapters with the extra chapter made up of verses taken from Joel 2:28-32. But in this commentary, we will be using the King James Version (KJV) as the base text, and the usual division into three chapters.

### **OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1:1            | Title   |
| 1:2-7          | Armies - locust metaphor - judgment                     |
| 1:8-13         | Lamentation and ruin                                    |
| 1:2,5,11,13,14 | Exhortation to old men, drunkards, husbandmen, priests  |
| 1:15           | “Day of the LORD”                                       |
| 1:16-20        | Reaction and frustration                                |
| 2:1-11         | The LORD'S army   |
| 2:12-19        | Exhortation to rend hearts, fast, assemble              |
| 2:20           | The Northern army removed                               |
| 2:21-27        | Rain and restoration                                    |
| 2:28-29        | Spirit gifts given out                                  |
| 2:30-32        | Wonders before the “great and terrible day of the LORD” |
| 3:1-8          | Nations in court  |
| 3:9-15         | Preparations for war in the valley of decision          |
| 3:16-17        | Nations judged  |
| 3:18-21        | Millennium  |

**JOEL'S MESSAGE:**

Joel's message describes an initial devastation that will come on the land which will be followed finally by glory. He tells us that first God's land would be stripped clean, but ultimately would be blessed with peace and prosperity, its mountains pouring down wine and milk. The cyclical nature of God's judgment of army after army attacking the land is aptly symbolized by the succession of plagues of locusts devastating the land. This pattern of the past becomes a blueprint to interpret the future.

**JOEL - PROPHET OF GLOOM, DOOM AND GLORY**

- JOEL 1 -- Gloom ---- A Day of the LORD upon Judah
- JOEL 1 -- Doom ---- Invasion of BABYLON
- JOEL 2 -- Gloom ---- A Day of the LORD coming upon Israel
- JOEL 2 -- Doom ---- Invasion by "NORTHERN ARMY"
- JOEL 2 -- Glory ---- Former & Latter RAIN
- JOEL 2 -- Glory ---- SPIRIT GIFTS pour out
- JOEL 3 -- Gloom --- A Day of the LORD coming upon Babylon the Great.
- JOEL 3 -- Doom ---- Sun and Moon DARKENED.
- JOEL 3 -- Glory ---- Hills Flow with MILK

**THE PROPHET JOEL AND HIS TIMES:**

Joel gives no historical setting or information on himself other than that he is the son of Pethuel. It is uncertain when Joel was written, but there are some good clues such as the reference in Joel 1:14 to "the house of the LORD". Obviously Solomon's temple still existed (Joel 1:9,14), but the heart of the people was not right, and the gloom of impending judgment was hanging over the land.

Is the impending judgment the Assyrian invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel when Samaria was taken and the people exiled? Joel makes no specific mention of the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians did devastate the territory in the north; however the **fourfold** series of attacks launched by Nebuchadnezzar on the southern kingdom of Judah fit more closely the description of the invasions by **four** waves of locusts in Joel chapter 1:4.

Another clue is found in verses 2 and 3 where the prophet addresses his audience. First, it is the "*old men*" who are the elders, then the inhabitants of the land who are to tell their children and who are to continue passing the message on to the fourth generation. **The phrase, fourth generation, suggests that Joel was written at the beginning of Josiah's reign** because after four generations the exiles returned under Zerubabel. In Matthew the four generations are pointed out:

- *MAT 1:11 And Josias begat Jechonias (1st-2<sup>nd</sup> generation) and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel (2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> generation); and Salathiel begat Zorobabe (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> generation);*

The "*old men*" would have would have directly heard of the Assyrian invasion of the land. Their ears would have been pricked by Joel's warning, yet this disaster was but a taste of what to come.

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## **(Section 1) SETTING THE STAGE:**

Foundations are laid in Joel chapter 1 for the rest of the book. This prophecy is multilayered and has a fuller meaning than the immediate fulfillment. For example, the vivid insects picture in verses 4-7 carry forward as a backdrop to the future prophecies in chapters 2 & 3. Therefore don't skip chapter 1 or you will miss the flavor of this amazing book.

***JOEL 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel <3100> the son of Pethuel <6602>. 2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.***

*Strong's numbers:*

- 3100 Yôw'êl {yo-ale}; AV - Joel 19x:
- 6602 P<sup>c</sup>thûw'êl {peth-oo-ale'} from 6601 and 410; n pr m
  - 6601 pâthâh {paw-thaw'} (1) to be spacious, be open, be wide
  - 410 'êl {ale} AV - God 213, god 16, power 4, mighty 5, goodly 1, great 1, idols 1

Joel is a compound of two titles of God, "Yahweh" and "El". Pethuel means "to spread out, to open." When both parts are combined, it suggests this prophecy of Yahweh El is to be spread out over time and the focus may not be limited only to the time of Joel. For example, several time periods apply to the graphic but gloomy description, the "*day of the LORD*".

***JOEL 1:2,3*** – see introduction, page 2

***JOEL 1:4 That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.***

Four plagues of insects, one after another – palmerworm, locust, cankerworm and caterpillar! After one such calamity the land is stripped, after four there would be nothing left! This vivid description shows in startlingly graphic terms that the "*day of the LORD*" involves utter destruction far beyond a normal natural disaster. In nature these waves of insects would require significant time periods between each plague for the food source to replenish, but in verse 4 they follow one upon the other.

The distinction between palmerworm and cankerworm or locust and caterpillar, are varied depending on the translation, and so require care in interpretation. In fact in the Septuagint there is a note saying: "It is difficult to assign the exact meaning of the Greek". Couple this with the old age question of what is the difference between a locust and a grasshopper and the homework begins.

In 1921 Sir Boris Uvarov discovered that the familiar green grasshoppers of the African and Asian bush are really locusts in disguise. What Sir Boris observed was when thousands of eggs hatch at one time the young grasshoppers would constantly touch one another, which would trigger a change

both in colour and behaviour. The young grasshopper/locusts would seek each others company and turn yellow, black and red, forming the dreaded airborne masses that sweep across the land looking for food. This change in the character of the grasshopper is significant to understanding how Joel's prophecy unfolds.

**JOEL 1:4 – FOUR STAGES OF LOCUSTS:**

*v.4 “What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.” (New American Standard - NAS)*

*v.4 “What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.” (New King James Version - NKJV)*

Rather than being descriptive of different varieties of insects the above translations show the words refer to the locust at various stages of its lifecycle. In Hebrew their literal meanings are lopper, multiplier, licker and finisher. Unger’s Bible Dictionary suggests that all four have to do with different developmental stages of locust.

**LOCUSTS – SYMBOLIC OF AN INVADING ARMY OF MEN:**

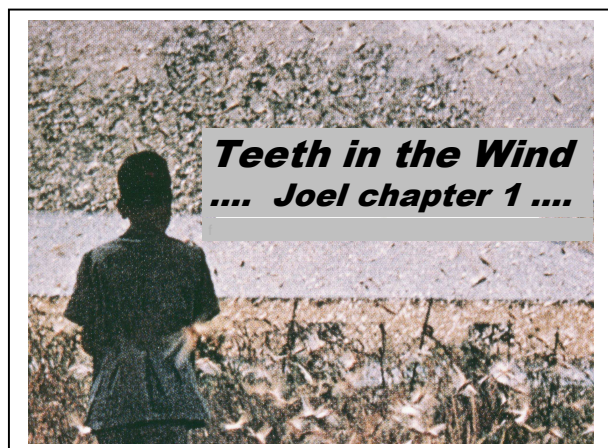
*JOEL 1:6 For a NATION is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose TEETH are the TEETH of a lion, and he hath the cheek TEETH of a great lion.*

The image of locusts is also used in the Revelation to describe an invading army – a different army and another time period, but the locust symbol is an apt representation of this army as well.

- *REV 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of MEN.*

The appropriateness of using the symbol of locusts to represent an invading army is better appreciated by understanding what a plague of locusts is really like. An article from the August 1969 *National Geographic* magazine gives a vivid description. The article is entitled "TEETH of the Wind" and the setting is in the Sudan desert. It reads in part:

“The first stirring was a mile away from Khilil's patch of bulrush millet when he noticed it. 'Sirb!' he called to me in Arabic. Through the glassy waves of heat rising off the Sudanese desert, I could see what he meant. A hint of greyness



slid along the sand, vague as a touch of smoke. Then, as we watched, it gathered into a wisp and began to spill over the dune slopes. Once it reached the stubble of scrub growth below, the wisp quickened and spread in the wind until it became a cloud of locusts, three miles wide that swept straight toward us.

'Yalla!' Khalil shouted. Let's go!' We sprinted across to his dried-mud house. 'My father knew these invaders before me' he said. 'He called them the 'teeth of the wind'.

And with that, the cloud swirled into us. Flying locusts the size of index fingers bounced off my face, tangled in my hair, and grabbed at my shirt with twitchy legs. Wherever I turned, the swarm glinted in the sun in crystalline flecks

that shifted and went from brown to gold to pink like tumbling bits of mica. All around us locusts struggled for room on the plants; they pushed, kicked, and shoved each other, semaphoring furiously with excited antennae. They ravaged the ears on top. They tugged at the leaves. They gnawed at the stems with such frenzy that we could hear the faint sound of thousands of tiny jaws grinding and chewing, as if someone were scraping a carrot.”

There are many similarities between the locust attack in the desert and the description of the invasion of Israel in Joel 2. However it is the exceptions that help identify the invader in Joel 2.

*JOEL 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. 3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4 The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. 6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. 7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: 11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong?*

The "National Geographic Magazine's" description of the locusts struggling for room, of pushing, kicking and shoving each other, semaphoring furiously with excited antennae, are very different from the orderly onslaught described in Joel 2:7,8. These differences are important in determining the identity of the army in Joel 2. Further when interpreting verse 4, the meaning becomes clear when the prophecy is not limited in scope to one time period. Four main waves of locusts do correspond to the four Babylonian incursions as detailed in 2 Kings 24 and 25. But as will be shown in Joel 1:7, there are parallels that also apply to the Assyrian invasion and, as will be shown in Joel chapters 2 and 3, to future invasions.

### **The Babylonians as Locust Invaders:**

2 Kings 24 & 25 give details of four separate invasions by different armies. These four invasions fit well Joel's description in verse 4 of four stages of locusts.

- **INVASION #1 – 2 Kings 24:1**

*"In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him."*

- This event was like the action of the "palmerworm" or "lopper" because in a sense Nebuchadnezzar lopped off the head of Judah when he placed Jehoiakim in subjection.

- **INVASION #2 – 2 Kings 24:2**

*"And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets."*

- These raiders are descriptive of the “locust” (KJV) or "multiplier" which caused increasing devastation with each band.
- **INVASION #3 – 2 Kings 24:10-17**  
*Verse 10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.*
- The result of this campaign was the sacking of the temple, the city, and the cream of the population was deported. The city was licked clean by the "licker"!
- **INVASION #4 – 2 Kings 25:1-28**  
*Verse 4 And it came to pass...that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; 4 And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled.*
- This section describes the final siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of Judah, the "finisher" which completed the project begun in Jehoikim's reign.

### **THE RUIN AND SORROW THE LOCUSTS BRING:**

**JOEL 1:7** *He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.*

Joel shows the devastation by the image of the fig tree being debarked, made white and laid bare by millions of locusts. This image could well describe the land after the Assyrian lion had destroyed the Northern Kingdom and taken its people captive. However, the fourfold sequence of incursions by the Babylonians yet again fits the context of Joel better.

Jeremiah also prophesies of the devastation that the coming invader would bring.

- *JER 5:17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees:*
- *JER 5:6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them ...*
- *Joel and Jeremiah both prophesied about a lion-like nation that would destroy Judah. (see also Jer. 4:7;6:17)*

The next couple of verses show the tremendous outpouring of sorrow the ruin of the land would cause.

#### **JOEL 1:8-13:**

**8** *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. 9 The meat offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn. 10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. 11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. 12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.*

Many of Jeremiah's prophecies also emphasize the feelings of those that witnessed the ruin of their beloved land.

- *JER 4:19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. 20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.*
- *JER 4:23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.*

The words "form" and "void" are "tohuw" (8414) and "bohuw" (922) also found in Gen. 1:2, showing just how destructive this Babylonian lion was in reducing the land to a formless emptiness comparable to the world before our six day creation.

### **A Call to Repentance**

*Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD.*

Joel appeals to the people to cry unto the LORD in their time of trouble. There is no one else to turn to but God at a time of such calamity. This appeal suggests that Joel was prophesying near the time when Jeremiah began his ministry because Jeremiah begins by first appealing to the people to repent:

- *JER 3:12 Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.*

Later in Jeremiah's ministry God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people because they were so entrenched in their evil ways.

- *JER 11:14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry of prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.*

### **LOCUST ARMIES MARCH THROUGH THE EPOCHS:**

Yet, more relevant for us today, is the prophecy's multilayered meaning which reaches farther into the future than just the immediate fulfillment of the Babylonian invasion. Extending the time frame to encompass a larger picture, Joel also speaks of four separate powers that come from the North, whose armies devastate Israel at different times. History shows there have been three powers that fit. They were the Babylonians, the Grecian king of the North under Antiochus Epiphanies and the Romans. Joel 2:20 describes the fate of a future fourth King of the North whose armies will be driven into a desolate land between the seas. (See Ezekiel 38-39:16)

The first power, the nation in Joel 1:6 can be identified as Babylon. Here the invader is described as having the teeth of a lion and the cheek teeth of a great lion. Babylon is known in Scripture and



secular history as the great lion. The description of the Babylonian conquest as like an army of devouring locusts is most fitting.



In Jeremiah 4:7 there is a parallel prophecy where the lion is used as a symbol of Babylon.

- *JER 4:7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.*

This prophecy continues in Jeremiah chapter 5 with the addition of a wolf and a leopard.

- *JER 5:6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.*

Family outing at ancient Babylon with a stone lion.

It is interesting to note when comparing several prophecies that relate to these events, that the symbol of the bear is missing in Jeremiah.

| <b>EMPIRE --→</b> | <b>BABYLON</b> | <b>PERSIAN</b> | <b>GRECIAN</b> | <b>ROMAN</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Dan. 2:31-33      | HEAD           | BREAST         | THIGHS         | LEGS         |
| Dan. 7:4-7        | LION           | BEAR           | LEOPARD        | BEAST        |
| Jer. 5:6          | LION           |                | LEOPARD        | WOLF         |
| Rev.13:1,2        | LION           | BEAR           | LEOPARD        | BEAST        |

A brief study of history shows that the reason the bear is missing is that the Persian bear didn't destroy Israel, but, in fact, at the command of Cyrus, rebuilt Jerusalem. But Rome, as a devouring wolf ravaged Jerusalem in AD 70 and again in 135 AD. It is significant that the earliest symbol of the Romans was the wolf, which came from the legend of the founding of Rome by Romulus, who, with his brother Remus was supposedly suckled by a she-wolf in infancy. (*See Unger's Bible Dictionary*)

This historical background helps answer whether the locust imagery applies beyond Babylon. We will be looking at the evidence for this future interpretation in Joel chapters 2 and 3 where the days "of the LORD" will be revealed.

### **"DAYS OF THE LORD" in Joel: Nebuchadnezzar, Armageddon, Babylon the Great**

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

In Joel, five times the phrase "day of the LORD" is mentioned, encompassing at least four different time periods.

- *JOEL 1:15 Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*
- *JOEL 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion... for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;*
- *JOEL 2:11 ...for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*
- *JOEL 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.*
- *JOEL 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.*

### **TWO FUTURE EVENTS called "THE DAY OF THE LORD"**

- *JOEL 2:3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.*
- *HAB.3:5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.*

The events described in these verses are future. The question is when. There are actually two possibilities, two "day(s) of the LORD" yet to come. The first is Armageddon and comes after Jesus Christ has returned and after the resurrection and judgment of the responsible. The second is just before the millennium and is called the "*great and terrible day of the LORD*" in Joel 2:31. The order is more important than just to establish a chronological sequence, for before Joel 2:3 occurs Christ's saints will be with him and will participate in causing some of the devastation coming upon this earth! In Joel 2:31, "*the great and terrible day of the LORD*", Christ's power will be manifested throughout the whole earth and nothing will stand in its way. In Joel's final "day of the LORD", the LORD'S anger will be against the rivers of armies, and against the sea of people, and he will go forth in indignation and will thresh the nations in anger! This "*great and terrible day of the LORD*" is further described by the prophet Habakkuk.

- *HAB.3:8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?*
- *HAB.3:12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.*

What would cause God to be so displeased that He would allow His power to be used against the rivers, and the sea, and that He would thresh the people in such anger? Jeremiah 4:19 expresses the pain and despair the action will bring, so why does God allow, and bring to pass again and again, destruction upon destruction?

- *JER 4:19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. 20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.*

Jeremiah gives the answer:

- *JER 4:22 For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish (silly) children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.*

In Jeremiah's time the people failed from a lack of knowledge of God. They didn't understand His ways or His prophets. They did not believe, let alone hear and understand Joel's prophecy forecasting either the threatening teeth of destruction or the future glory. They were like foolish, silly children who did as they pleased, had no vision, and they perished. In the future, with the "great and terrible day of the LORD", this foolishness will be compounded by dissolution, rebellion and then direct confrontation as seen in Joel 3.

### **FOREIGN IDOLS IN GOD'S TEMPLE!**

The prophet Ezekiel was given a firsthand glimpse of the corruption of the people when taken by God's angel to Jerusalem in the days prior to the final Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. The leaders and the people were perversely persistent in worshipping idols, not heeding the escalating prophecies of impending doom, and the promised Day of the Lord to come.

- *EZE.8:9 And he (God's angel) said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10 So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.*
- *EZE.8:14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.*

Can you imagine God seeing this and not reacting? And this didn't stop here but the next scene involved the gods of Persia as well.

- *EZE.8:16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.*

- *EZE.8:18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.*

Ezekiel makes it clear that that persistent rebellion will provoke God's hot displeasure. In fact, we need to have the same feelings and desire to see justice achieved in the face of the gross immorality, profaning of God's name, and violence in our world. God, however, is great in mercy and gives opportunity to repent, and in Jonah 3:5 the people of Nineveh did repent and the day of the LORD didn't come at that time. Israel, in Joel 1:2,13,14 was similarly warned and given great opportunity, but eventually there comes a point when there is no knowledge, no joy, no justice in the land, and no hope of it ever improving. Then God acts and the "*day of the LORD*" comes. History repeats, bringing the judgments of the "*day of the LORD*" to the people of different eras who do not repent and change when warned by God's prophets.

As there was deliverance for faithful men such as Noah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and many others, so there is a way of escape for the faithful. Escape does not imply that there is no hardship or trial but just as God sustained these men so will He help his faithful. Jesus promises, "*I will never leave thee or forsake thee.*" The righteous must heed God's word, search out the message of His prophets as for hid treasure and obey His commandments. For those that do search, the gloom will be turned to glory.

**The GLOOM will be turned to GLORY!**

- *HAB.2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*
- *JOEL 3:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.*

Joel's warning of gloom and doom is depressingly stark. But God's messages of darkness in His word do not usually finish in the depths of despair. God's judgments are designed to bring a change of heart that will lead to repentance, salvation and God's glory. God wants to give mankind a reason to hope for the future. The prophecy of Joel concludes with a glorious vision of the future age.

**"The Day of the LORD" – ALL AFFECTED!**

The faithful at Christ's return will witness the last two judgments, and even though glory will finally come, the suffering that first comes will be overwhelming! As happened in 587 BC and AD 70, all will be affected (Joel 1:8,11,20) from the virgin who is just married, to the husbandmen, to the beasts of the field and rivers of waters.

- *JOEL 1:8 LAMENT like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.*
- *JOEL 1:11 Be ye ASHAMED, O ye husbandmen; HOWL, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.*
- *JOEL 1:20 The beasts of the field CRY also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.*

We pray for God's kingdom, but are we prepared for the "*day of the LORD*"? Scripture shows that the saints will be removed, but the exact timing isn't given.

**Bible references showing saints removed from various days of the LORD:**

1. Daniel and his three friends – removed (Dan. 1:6).
2. Noah and his family were in the ark 7 days before the flood.
3. Enoch is removed (Gen. 5:24).
4. Lot, family, removed - (Gen.19:17).
5. Righteous taken away - (Isa. 57:1).
6. Disciples taken from the storm - (John 6:21).
7. Counted worthy to escape - (Luke 21:36).

To what extent will the prophetic occurrences prophesied by Joel affect us in the future when Christ returns? We do have examples like Daniel, Noah, Enoch and Lot, which were removed at some point. Isaiah 57:1 says that the "*righteous*" will be taken away. Also there are pointed parallels in the life of Jesus such as John 6:21 where he took his disciples from the storm to Capernaum, "the village of Comfort". More directly, in the Olivet prophecy (Lk.21:36), Jesus speaks of the righteous being counted worthy to escape. The question is where escape fits in the timeline of the events that lead up to the "day of the LORD". Will the meal and drink offering be cut off as in Joel 1:9? Will our vine be dried up, v.12? Will our nation wither because there is no joy in the land?

- *JOEL 1:9 The meat (meal) offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn. (Fellowship - the bread and wine)*
- *JOEL 1:12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.*

The answer may be connected with the identity of the nations represented here by various trees. Obviously, the immediate application was that the real trees in Judah withered from about 600 BC to 587BC, but in the fuller interpretation the trees would represent various nations, perhaps the modern nations of the ten toes in Daniel's image. There is no clear scriptural identification of a nation connected to the maple tree, whereas the vine and fig tree are closely associated with Israel. Could joy wither from our land, and could we, like Judah, lose our vision and enthusiasm for the things of God?

- *HAB.3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 YET I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Will we, like Habakkuk be able to see our world tumbling down, and still rejoice in the LORD and joy in the God of our salvation? How we react depends greatly on how clearly we see the vision. Habakkuk saw the vision and said: "*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my*

*salvation.*" The vision is there, but do we see it in its fullness with all the parallels of language, types and times? Will our lamps be brightly burning and will we go forth to meet the bridegroom upon his return? Joel's prophecy can be a wonderful help in obtaining the prophetic oil and godly understanding so that we will be ready when the bridegroom returns.

- *Matt.25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*