

COMMENTARY ON THE PROPHET JOEL

This prophet's name is actually "Yoel," as there is no "J" in Hebrew. The name is said to mean, "Yahweh is God." Years ago on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem, I met a shop-owner who introduced himself to me as "Yoel." From here forward, however, I will refer to the prophet by the name we all know, "Joel." The brief three chapters of Joel's prophecy are difficult to pinpoint as to the time in which they were written. My best guess is that he wrote during the reign of Joash over Judah (which was likely in the last third of the ninth century B.C. - 835 B.C. and forward). The prophet's writing concerns the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and its capital, Jerusalem. There are some lively Messianic songs crafted after passages in this book; one line I recall in particular goes, "They rush on the city, they run on the wall, great is the army that carries out His Word." This references the "locust army" of which Joel speaks (2:9). This is metaphorical of the coming invasions (possibly both the imminent invasion of the Babylonians and the invasions during the Tribulation period). A leading feature of Joel's prophecy is "The Day of the LORD," with five of the twenty-five occurrences in the Hebrew Scriptures being found here. This phrase is an eschatological term - speaking of the "last days." Theologically, the phrase refers to a future time that includes the Tribulation, the glorious second coming of Christ, and the Millennial ("thousand-year") kingdom of Christ on earth. It is essentially when God steps out from behind the curtain and shows His great sovereign power openly. No one need ever ask during that time (2:17), "Where is God?" He will be abundantly evident. There will be a judgment element - the judgments of the Tribulation, the judgment of Israel, the judgment of the nations, and the Great White Throne. There will also be the "glory" aspect of the "Yom Yahweh" ("Day of the LORD"). That is the peaceful, prosperous reign of Jesus from Jerusalem over this earth. What a day that will be!

CHAPTER 1

One facet of prophetic utterances in the Hebrew Scriptures is that local events are also used as prophetic revelations. In this case, a locust invasion followed by a widespread fire wreak havoc on the land of Judah. There is such devastation as has rarely (if ever) been seen. The local, present experience is awful, but that which is to come is worse! There is the Babylonian invasion within two centuries, and then there are the awful Tribulation judgments, which are yet future. In all of this there is the ever-present call for repentance, as seen in verses 13 and 14 of this chapter. We know from the Biblical record that this repentance did not come.

THE DAY OF THE LORD - THE LOCUST INVASION

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

1) Joel does not speak from his own mind and on his own authority. It is "The word of the LORD" that came to him. All of God's prophets were spokesmen for heaven, declaring God's Word to God's people - in this case, to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The prophet spoke to men for God, while the priest spoke to God for men. In corporate religious gatherings, you can tell the difference between prophetic and priestly approaches in this way: if you see the minister's back quite a bit, the approach is priestly; if he faces you more, it is prophetic.

2), 3) His message is to be heard by those old enough to understand, and it is to be told to the next generation who will keep the story going to future generations. Isn't that the plan of God over the millennia, to reveal His unfolding drama of redemption to generation after generation? The trans-generational communication of truth is why we have a Bible today! All were supposed to listen to the message - a word about things such as they had never before seen. Nor had those

who came before them seen such a devastation as was brought on by this locust invasion. 4) Four descriptives are used of these locusts - cutting, swarming, hopping, and destroying. Were these different varieties of the creatures, or did these words describe advancing levels of activity by them? Or is there something else here? In any case, the locusts made a lasting impression on those who saw them, and they brought devastation to the plant life of Judah with their invasion. Was there anything left to eat of plant life after they came? It seems not. And future judgments pictured by these will do even more damage - direct injury to and death of persons, not just plants.

THE CALL TO MOURN OVER SIN

5), 6), 7) Three imperative verbs open this paragraph, 1. "Awake" - The lethargy, perhaps even sleep brought about by their abuse of wine is called to an end! Solomon had criticism for too much sleep - Proverbs 6 compares the industrious ant to the man of slumber, and the ant comes off looking better. These sleepy drunkards are to, 2. "Weep" - and they are to, 3. "Wail." That prosperity which has allowed you time to be drunk will end. The sweet wine which you love so much will be "cut off." For those whose life has become a drunken sleep, the party is about to be over! The locust army coming upon Judah will strip it of all agricultural produce. No leaves on the trees, or on the vines and other plants will mean no pomegranates, no grapes, no figs, no grain, no olives. These staples of the economy and essentials of the diet of the Judeans will be wiped out. Famine and death will follow; Judah will be devastated! The future judgments pictured by the impending loss will be greater still; see the Tribulation judgments of Revelation 6 - 16.

8), 9), 10) The despondency of the drunkards is followed by the lament for the priests and other ministers of the Lord among the people. As David had done and instructed the people to do at the death of Abner, as a young woman would when mourning the death of her intended, the call was to don sackcloth in expression of grief. The wearing of sackcloth is mentioned 47 times in the Bible, almost always in connection with grief and mourning. Disaster is upon them all, including the religious leaders whose living came from the people they served. When the people have no grain for bread, no olives for oil, no grapes for wine, the priests will go without as well. And equally, if not more, sad, is the lack of offerings to make to Yahweh. For dedicated priests, this would certainly be a difficult thing.

11), 12) Drunkards have been addressed, as have the priests and ministers. Now the farmers are spoken to concerning the great loss brought about by the invasion of locusts. Living for many years of my life in farming country, it has been my lot to see what happens when the rains do not come. The crops are pitiful, and the investment of the farmers only produces a loss, putting them in debt. This experience described by Joel is far worse than that. Every green leaf and stalk has been eaten by the pests. Joel speaks of the devastation to the grain, to the grape, to the apple, fig, pomegranate, and date (palm). The vine dries up, the tree languishes, and the harvest is destroyed. The consequence for the people is that their gladness dries up, and there is shame throughout the land. Just imagine how much worse it will be when the Babylonians come and rape, murder, and destroy! Actions have consequences, and the sin of the people has brought about the pestilence from the Lord, as it will bring the military invasion in the future.

13), 14) Repentance alone can begin to turn back the consequences of sin. So the spiritual leaders of the land are given nine commands - imperative verbs - to obey as a call to repent. Again is called for lamenting in sackcloth, signs of sorrow for sin. Wailing and sleeping in sackcloth pajamas are further demonstrations of grief at sin. Again, is mentioned that the things needed for sacrifices and offerings were not available because of the locust-created famine. A fast is in order, as going without food demonstrates a seriousness of purpose and prayer, as when David prayed for Bathsheba's baby to live. A solemn assembly is more in order than a time of

feasting. The elders of the people, and all the people are to be called to gather to the house of the LORD. It is not time for a concert, a play, or a sporting event. It is time for God's people to worship and confess their sins. Maybe then God will bless instead of blasting them.

THE CHARACTER OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

15), 16) Doctrinally, the Day of Yahweh (the LORD) is a time when God's sovereign rule over this universe is manifested in such a way that all can see. Prophetically, it consists of the Tribulation and the Millennial Reign of Christ over the earth. The locust plague of Joel's day was a small picture of the great judgments to come. The locusts had brought about famine, and Joel would go on to indicate the awful plight of both man and beast because of the loss of food supplies. The singing and dancing with joy and gladness are now absent - replaced with sorrow and loss. When will men learn that the actions of sin cause us to feast at the table of consequences - which is never a pleasant meal?

17), 18) Seed rotting in the ground instead of germinating is an indication of drought, which must have accompanied the locust invasion. With no crops to store, the storehouses and granaries are not maintained and fall into disrepair. It seems that even the beasts of the field, as well as the cattle and sheep, groan in perplexity because there is no pasture, and likely drying up streams mean they are lacking in water, as well. Man's sin has brought about ecological disaster, with suffering for lower creation as well as for himself.

19), 20) Joel cries out to Yahweh, identifying with his people like a good prophet should. When the locusts have finished devouring every living plant in sight, it looks as if a prairie fire has licked up grass, vine, plant, and tree. The accompanying drought is again referred to in its effect upon the animals. They are panting in thirst because the brooks have dried up and the grass of the pasture has been locust-eaten. Such misery affects the prophet that he calls for the people to repent and for the LORD to help. May we in the twenty-first century learn the lessons of Judah in Joel's day. Let us learn to forsake sin and flee to Yahweh, which is the only remedy for our troubles and woes.

CHAPTER 2

Scholars and critics argue much about Joel's prophecy as to its date and the meaning of the language - whether he is describing literal locusts or figuratively telling of armies to come. It seems most likely that a real locust plague, brought about as judgment upon sin, prefigured an army invasion that would also come upon Judah for her sin. Whether the army is Babylon in the sixth century BC, or the Antichrist's armies in the eschatological future, again the scholars argue. The fact is that both things are true - there was a literal Chaldean army that sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and carried away captive the inhabitants of Judah. There will also clearly be a future confederation of western nations under Antichrist's command that will do great harm to God's people and their land. This is in the "Day of the LORD," that time when God shall make His rule in this world known by manifest intervention in the affairs of Israel and the world.

TURN TO GOD, FROM SIN

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

1), 2) There were several things accomplished by the blowing of trumpets in Israel, including gathering of assemblies, the announcement of holy days and feasts, and the warning of the people and a call to arms. Clearly this was an alarm and a call to arms, announced by the blowing of the "shophar," a long, curved ram's horn. The watchman's alert would result in fear, evidenced by trembling among all the land's inhabitants. Man has had his day, living as if there were no God

in heaven, but now would come the “Day of the Lord.” God’s manifest action was closer in time than they wanted to know. A plague of locusts would produce certain effects that are described here, probably related to the outlook of men’s hearts more than to the literal weather. God’s judgment would appear to men who were estranged from Him as darkness. Of course, to the man walking with God, judgment is not a thing to be feared; so, to him it would be like a blessed sunshiny day. The description here of a large and mighty army does seem to describe real soldiers, invading the land called “holy.” How often had the sins of the people brought upon them the judgment of God; will men never learn that the way of obedience is the way of blessing? How much loss and devastation does it take for men to begin to believe God’s Word?

3) The description now sounds more like a devastating human army than the locust swarms of chapter one. Flames go forth before them, and refuse burns in fires behind them as they bring complete destruction. The territory into which the armies come are beautiful as was the garden of Eden in the early creation. That beauty, however, is suddenly gone and replaced with burning embers and smoke rising from the charred debris.

4), 5), 6) The focus now turns from the panorama of devastation to the appearance of the army itself. Five times in these two verses we find “like” or “as.” Joel reaches into the animal world to find a comparison for them, and they resemble war horses. There are implements of war seen in the chariots’ likeness. One wonders if some of the developments in war machinery that we have seen through the present time were viewed prophetically by Joel. How hard it would be to find likeness in his ancient world for comparisons. The speed of horses, the leaping above mountain peaks, the weaponry that kindles fires all around - these were certainly strange sights to the eyes of the prophet. The military capabilities of our day would overwhelm one from such an ancient era. Any who survive the onslaught for any length of time are certainly in physical anguish. Those who view its approach are blanched, made white with fear.

7), 8), 9) Infantry soldiers are seen here. Their capabilities are amazing! The defenses, pictured here by a wall, are easily scaled by the attackers. Their formations remain orderly as they come in columns, waves of adversaries to bring destruction. Efforts to repel them are futile, and still they come on. Having broken through the defenses, they practice city warfare, entering each house to discover and eliminate enemy combatants. This irresistible force has its way in destruction and death. The unbroken ranks are out for victory, and they will have it!

10), 11) Once again, differing scholars disagree on whether Joel here describes locust activity or future military incursion. Perhaps both should be seen in his description. First, are experienced earthquakes, and then the shaking of the heavens - a mysterious consideration, indeed. The sky is blackened by the invasion so that sun, moon, and stars are no longer visible. That this is “yom Yahweh,” the “day of the LORD,” is made clear here in two ways. One, “*the LORD utters His voice,*” and two, this judgment is called here “*the day of the LORD.*” The locust invasion was a foretaste of worse judgments to come - judgments threatened by Yahweh in His law so long ago - blessing for obedience is contrasted with cursing for disobedience - things just such as are described here by Joel. God keeps His Word.

THE CONDITION FOR GOD SPARING HIS LAND

12) This call to repentance is evidenced in the phrase “return (or turn) to me.” The people were so far away from God, and He wanted them to return like the father of the prodigal son in Jesus’ New Testament parable. It is easy to ***seem to turn*** to God, with some outward expressions that may not last very long, but God wanted His people to turn to Him with all their hearts. This would show up in some outward expressions, such as fasting, weeping, mourning. I recently talked to a man about his walk with God who told me that he was bitter because God had not answered his prayer

to give him a wife. The man's life was a spiritual shambles, but he could not see his sin, nor was he at all repentant. Israel needed to repent where it counts - in the heart. When that happens, it will show in the life!

13) Throughout time in the East, men have torn their garments as a sign of deepest grief and agony of heart. It had apparently become such a rote action that God now challenged them to let it begin in the heart - not in the clothing. It was said by the Psalmist (51:17) that God would not despise a broken and contrite heart. The way to turn **from sin** is to turn **to God**. I said to the previously-mentioned man that he needed to work on **being the right person** before he could ask God to **bring him the right person** for a mate. When men turn to God, He always responds with mercy and grace. The people of Joel's day could expect no less. The disaster of judgment is never God's first choice. He is slow to anger, and He would rather show His grace and mercy than to judge.

14) Joel sets forth a simple matter. God is constant in His dealings with sin; He has promised to judge Israel for their sins, but if they change their hearts and their behavior, God can change His dealings with them. Sin always has negative consequences; repentance always can avert those consequences. It is the same today - we deserve hell because of our rebellion against God. But He can open the gates of heaven to the man who opens his heart to the offer of salvation in God's Son, Jesus. This, of course, includes a change of mind about sin on the part of the sinner. Then He allows us to worship Him, even giving us the ability to make offerings.

15), 16) Seven more imperative verbs are in these two verses. Yahweh is commanding His people to come together in a holy convocation. The people of Israel should gather in an assembly to fast, turning from their normal activities. Their spiritual leaders should lead them in prayer, calling out to God to spare His people and to not allow them to become a reproach and laughingstock among the nations. This assembly is so important that newly-wed couples should leave the bridal chamber and attend. Positive results for God's people always follow such a path of spiritual action. If Israel would genuinely repent, God's blessings would follow.

17) The spiritual leaders of the nation (Judah) are called upon to stand in the gap for the people. Either it was already happening, or they were in danger of the surrounding nations mocking the people of Yahweh. They were saying, or they might say, *"Where is their God."* People without faith are unable to see what believing eyes can behold, but that will change one day, in the day of the LORD. Again, Yahweh will step into the view of all, manifesting His sovereign power in great judgments and in signal rescue of His own. The day of the LORD will remove all doubt as to Who God is and what He can do. The people of Israel will no longer be a byword among the nations.

THE CALLING OFF OF THE JUDGMENT

18) His righteous zeal, jealousy for the people He called and chose, would stir itself, and God would look and act in pity upon them. As a jealous husband, the Lord will do whatever it takes to protect and nourish the bride of His heart!

19) The prayers of the priests and other ministers were answered. "Instead of a judgment of drought and famine, I'll send you grain for nourishing bread, wine for refreshing drink, and oil to anoint your parched skin and make you satisfied and glad!" During the Babylonian siege, Jeremiah would be God's voice to say, *"Call unto me and I will answer you, and give you great and mighty things..."* Joel pictures the people of God calling on Him, and he shows God answering in a wonderful way. The immutable God still operates in that "cause and effect" way.

20) Whether you see this as the locust army or a real future army of Babylonians (or the eschatological armies of Russia), all will be driven out by the Lord in the proper time. The locusts will be wind-driven into the desert, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean. They had wrought a

great devastation in Judah before God dispatched them to their own doom.

21), 22) Joel personifies some of God's non-rational creation, telling the soil and the beasts to fear no longer. Why? It is simply because now that the enemy is driven out and destroyed, things will return to their natural condition. The locust army had brought a great devastation, but Yahweh will also do great things - things of restoration! There will once again be green pastures for grazing. Orchards and vineyards will once again bear figs (and no doubt other unnamed produce) and grapes. God the Creator can restore His creation, and He will do so abundantly.

THE CAUSE FOR GLADNESS

23) The drought and resultant famine that accompanied the locust invasion will be reversed, as Yahweh sends the early and latter rains as He had done before. The early rains (October - December) are important for germination, since they come just after the sowing. The latter rains come (March-April) to finish out the growth of the crops. The children of Judah can be glad and rejoice as they have been vindicated by the Judge of all the earth - their God. That God does this in "righteousness" indicates that there had been repentance of the sins that led to the judgment of pestilence in the first place. God cannot **excuse** sin, but He can and does **forgive** it.

24) The summary of the restoration is here. Grain, wine, and olive oil are three staples of the nourishment of Judah. They will all return in abundance - *"threshing floors shall be full,"* and *"vats shall overflow."* A New Testament counterpart to this might be found in Jesus giving us life and giving it to us abundantly!

25), 26) Yahweh makes it clear to His people that it was His hand they felt so severely upon them. He was not in hiding as they suffered, but rather was making them suffer because they rebelled so against Him. But that would all change if they would change their ways, if they would repent. As surely as the locust had brought a famine, Yahweh would bring a feast. The sovereign God obligates Himself to reverse the suffering of His people when they reverse their ways. It was His army (of locusts) that had done the damage, and He would certainly make it right. Then His people would eat to their fill, be satisfied, and they would praise the name of Him Who worked in their behalf.

27) So often in the Hebrew Scriptures we read, *"Then they shall know."* Judah and her neighbors shall know that Yahweh had chastised them, and they would be clear also that it was He Who restored blessing to their land. This is, after all, *"the day of the LORD,"* the time of God's manifest power in judging and His manifest glory in blessing. Moses had written *"The LORD your God is in the midst of you"* (Numbers 14:14, Deuteronomy 7:21). The blessings that follow repentance will help them acknowledge this great presence. They will know there is no other God, and they will live confidently, never being put to shame. What an ending!

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

28) This portion of our lesson text looks far into the future of Jerusalem. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, on the Day of Pentecost, there would come a spiritual breakthrough like the world had never seen. The Holy Spirit would be dispatched by Jesus in a new ministry in the now-born church, Christ's body. There would be a widely opened door to the Gentiles, without circumcision or any other rite of passage through Judaism. The fledgling church's activity would be accompanied in the early days by miracles and signs and wonders that would signify Divine authority for this brand new thing called the church. What a day that would be, the birthday of the church, this Body of Christ, called out from the world, to call others to join us by faith!

29) A careful comparison of Joel's prophecy with the words of Peter at Pentecost demonstrates

that not all of which Joel spoke was coming to pass that day. He makes it clear that the Spirit received that day was the same Spirit Joel wrote about, but the signs from verse 30 onward are reserved for the end times. Notice that the new ministry of God's Spirit was not for the elite only, or the lowly only; it was for all people who would trust God's Son. I implore you today, friends, to turn TO GOD, FROM SIN, and receive the great blessings God has reserved for those who trust His Son! God sent His Son Jesus to die for the sins of Adam's race. He died for you; trust Him.

30), 31) Joel looks far down the corridor of time into the distant future of prophetic, end-time events. The prophet sees things that seem to accompany the terrors of the Tribulation. Jesus spoke of such terrible things in the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). Things will become so bad that men's hearts will fail them for fear. Yet while unbelieving men may see their doom in these signs, things that seem to accompany war, in them the people of God may see signs of their deliverance, when the Messiah comes down the skies to judge and bless.

32) Here is the setting for Paul's great quote in Romans 10:13, "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" Paul meant it about the soul's salvation from sin. Joel seems to intend it about physical deliverance from Tribulation terrors. In both cases, faith in Christ is the means of safety. Let us not just now quibble about our differences of opinion on matters of prophecy. Let us rather rejoice together that whether it is God's people needing deliverance from oppression, or sinners needing deliverance from the consequences of their sin, Jesus was and is the answer! Turning **to** God, **from** sin, **through** Jesus is the way to enjoy God's blessing.

CHAPTER 3

This third and final chapter of Joel's prophecy demonstrates the proper understanding of the phrase "the day of the LORD," or "yom Yahweh," as the Hebrew might be transliterated. Restated here, the day of the LORD is the eschatological era during which God's manifest presence and power are unleashed on a world deserving judgment. From the perspective of a Pre-millennarian who interprets Scripture from a dispensational platform, this means the Tribulation, the glorious return of Christ, the judgment of Israel, the judgment of the nations, and the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth. Some also add the Great White Throne Judgment in this. Verses one and 17 - 21 relate the glorious future for Israel, while the in-between passage discourses about the nations being judged. So, the two main elements of the period are judgment and blessing. Joel saw prophetic themes in a near view and a far view, looking down the corridor of time to things that are yet future even in our day.

THE DAY OF THE LORD IN SUMMARY

GLORY FOR ISRAEL - PART 1

1) In Luke 21:24, Jesus Spoke of the city of Jerusalem being "*trodden down of the Gentiles.*" The end of that ascendance over the city of the Great King will mark the fulfilling of the "*times of the Gentiles.*" Those "times" began with Nebuchadnezzar conquering the city and taking Jews captive to Babylon. They will end with the glorious return of Jesus to the earth, at which time God will "*restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem.*" Even today, Temple Mount is under the governance of the Jordanian Waqf, and instead of a beautiful Temple, it is adorned with a Moslem shrine, the Dome of the Rock, and a Moslem mosque, the Mosque of Omar. But God will one day change all of that, to Israel's advantage and His glory.

GRIEF FOR THE NATIONS

2), 3) Not only will there be a gathering of the Jews when Jesus returns, there will also be a

gathering of nations, presumably their leaders, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The *diaspora*, the scattering of the Jews around the globe, happened in large part because of persecution by the nations. The Romans gave a *faux* name to the land - "Palestina" - to taunt the Jews with memories of their ancient and perennial foes, the Philistines. The land was always "Israel" in the eyes of those who believe the Scriptures, and it became so officially in 1948. Sadly, parts of Israel were and are still under the control of others, as Joel described here. Over the centuries, almost 20 of them now, the nations of the world have largely mistreated the Jews in every conceivable way. God says He will enter into judgment with them for it, and you can be sure He will do so!

4), 5), 6) These coastal adversaries, Tyre and Sidon, were on the northwest of Israel. Philistia was the region roughly known today as Gaza, where the five lords of the Philistines ruled (in Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashdod, and Ashkelon). These wicked people set themselves against Yahweh by opposing Judah and Jerusalem. Zechariah 2:8 relates that to touch the Jew is to touch the apple of God's eye. He does not take it lightly, and there will be retribution. All these nations that demean, despise, and attack Israel will answer to God for it. Those ancients repeatedly robbed Judah of her riches for their own idol temples. They even sold Jews to the Greeks to get them away from their own God-given home. Judgment will come, and it will come hard.

7), 8) As we say in America, "turnabout is fair play." God promises exactly that to these evil adversaries. God promises to bring the Jews home and to uproot those who sold them, allowing the Jews to do the same to them. "Like sin, like punishment," is an old truth, as their evil deeds come back on their own heads. There have been ancient reprisals on these neighbors that resemble the prophecy, but the worst is yet to come for them. The end time judgment will make those old losses look small by comparison.

9), 10), 11) There is coming a great conflict between the nations and Yahweh. It is as if some battlefield monitor is now calling them each to prepare and gather. It is clearly a call to war - holy war, at that. There is movement commanded, "*let them draw near... let them come up...*" Munitions are prepared as agricultural implements are to be placed in the forge and turned into weapons of war - plowshares become swords, while pruning hooks become spears. All will recognize the contrast between this and Isaiah's words in 2:4 of his prophecy, where the reverse is done. Of course, the difference is that Joel speaks of a battle during the Tribulation between Yahweh and the forces of evil. Isaiah, on the other hand, describes the kingdom of Messiah, when peace rules and weapons can be turned into farm equipment. The man considered weak is to think of himself as a warrior for the Lord. Again, the nations are summoned to draw up battle lines, and the Lord is called upon to get His warriors in place. My mind goes to the days of Saul, when the Israelites and the Philistines stood apart and against each other in the Valley of Elah.

12), 13) Already mentioned in verse two, the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the place of gathering, where Yahweh will judge the assembled nations. One author said that the battle and the trial are one and the same. A play on words can be seen in the use of the word translated "judge" (*shaphat*) and the valley's name, "Jehosh**aphat**." Geographically, this valley is most often identified with one of the two valleys separating Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys. The image of harvest is once again employed to picture judgment, as in passages like Isaiah 17:5, Revelation 14:15, and Matthew 13:30.

14), 15), 16) Here, the Valley of Jehoshaphat is called a "*valley of decision*." "Great hosts of people will be there, facing the judgment of the Lord. This gathered multitude of noisy, boasting warriors is not there to **make a decision**. They will rather **suffer the decision** rendered by the God Who made them, who wanted to reach out to them through His nation of witness, Israel. But they did not receive the witness, and they attacked the emissaries of the God Whom they could not come against directly. Here find the fifth and final time Joel uses the expression "*the day of the LORD*."

The other four are in 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, and 2:31. I remind you that these are five of the twenty-five uses of the phrase in the Scriptures. At this time there will be upheavals in the heavens that cause temporary darkening of the heavenly luminaries. Yahweh's roar from Zion, the place of the great city of God, Jerusalem, will shake the heavens and the earth. But Yahweh's people need not fear, for He is their Refuge, their Stronghold. And He is ours, as well!

GLORY FOR ISRAEL - PART 2

17), 18) Isaac Watts penned the words, "Our God, our Help in ages past, Our Hope for years to come; our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal Home." The wonderful works of God on behalf of His people in times past give us confidence that He will work for us when our needs arise. Israel has a glorious future, so God has promised. One day they will know that He is God. One day Jerusalem shall be blessed with holiness, and it shall belong fully to the children of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. These spiritual blessings will be accompanied by physical, material joys as well. Wine and milk shall flow like rivers from the mountains. A land that so often struggles to have sufficient water will be a source of water for neighbors like Shittim, beyond the Jordan River. Embracing the Messiah will change everything for God's chosen people.

19) Two neighboring nations are singled out here for rebuke and promise of desolation. Each had mistreated God's people over the centuries. Egypt was guilty of enslaving the Israelites for over 400 years. No doubt many had died at the hands of taskmasters during that time. Pharaoh Neco had slain King Josiah at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29), and he had deposed and incarcerated King Jehoahaz just after that. The descendants of Esau, called Edomites, had been a thorn in the side of Israel many times, as well. The book of Obadiah is a tirade against them for their anti-Semitic ways and acts. Both those lands' violence against the Jews was not forgotten by Yahweh.

20) O, how I love this statement, "*Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations.*" There is a current trend in theology to have the church replace Israel and inherit her promises - I guess those doctrinal aberrants would say "spiritually" inherit them. This is not a spiritual promise - it is a clear statement that God's people will inhabit the city where He chose to put His name forever! Israel is not the church, and the church is not Israel. Notice the confirming words of two other prophets. Amos 9:15, "*I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,' says the LORD your God.*" Zechariah 14:11, "*And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.*" God made promises to Israel, and He will keep those promises, just as He will keep the commitments He has made to us.

21) The blood of those slain because of their faith cries out to God, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Tribulation saints. Genesis 4:10, "*And the LORD said, 'What have you done? The voice of **your brother's blood** is crying to me from the ground.'*" Revelation 6:10, "*They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and **avenge our blood** on those who dwell on the earth?'*" Yahweh has not forgotten the blood of His people. They will dwell in Zion, and God makes His home there as well.

Working on this volume as I approach birthday number 77 reminds me of the heritage I received from wonderful saints who went before me, and it causes me to think of the legacy I wish to leave my younger peers and those who come behind. I make no promise of absolute accuracy in every thought, but I have set down in brief what I believe these blessed verses to say and mean. My heart's desire is that they may be of some use in the labors of those who teach the Word.