

The Day of the Lord

An Expository “Journey” Through the Prophecy of Joel

- Introduction

August 9, 2020

Joel 1:1

The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

To the Glory of God

Now this is my first Sermon in an expository “journey” through the Prophecy of Joel. And so, I want to begin this Effort by giving you an overview of both the Prophet himself and the Book.

Now I call my feeble attempt to go through the Prophecy of Joel an “Expository Journey” because of what those two words mean:

Expository

I believe with every fiber of my being that Preaching *expositionally* glorifies God *better* and edifies God’s people *better*- than any other method of Preaching. And that is why I call this type of Preaching, “Expository Worship”. Now the dictionary definition of the word, “*exposit*” as:

A setting forth of the meaning or purpose of a particular writing. A discourse designed to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand.

Now I believe that God chose twelve very ordinary men to be His Apostles. And God supernaturally equipped these men to be His representatives- to establish the Church on the earth. And the Way that these men established the Christian Church on the earth was by doing four things:

- By receiving and writing down the final, full, and completed Revelation to Man (the New Covenant/Testament).

- Preaching and Teaching the Revelation that Jesus gave to them (the Gospel)
- By giving that Word “Divine Credibility” by performing Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- By giving the full and correct Interpretation of the Old Testament

... so, even though these were very ordinary men- God has called them to do a very extra-ordinary thing. And that logic holds true as it pertains to the 27 Books of the New Testament: God used very ordinary and common Words- such as nouns and verbs; pronouns and adverbs; adjectives and prepositional phrases to convey Divine Thoughts and Concepts to Man. So, even though these are very ordinary and common words- these *particular* Words were inspired and inerrant and infallible. So, these Words are the “Word of God.”

Now if we could walk up and ask Moses or David or Matthew or Paul or Joel what they meant by what they wrote- that would eliminate all the debate and all the confusion. But all of these men are dead. And so, all we have left- are the Words that they wrote down. And, by God’s Grace and Providence- the 40 men, who wrote the 66 Books of the Holy Bible wrote down words in the language of Hebrew or Aramaic or Koine Greek- which are very *precise* languages.

So, by examining these particular Words- we can understand what the writer meant by what he wrote. And that allows us to comprehend three very important things:

- What does that Verse or Passage actually say?
- What does that Verse or passage mean by what it says?
- What does Obedience to that Verse or Passage look like in the 21st Century?

Now the reason that these three things matters- is because of the Way that God has chosen to change the hearts of human beings and save their souls. Paul gave us insight about that in **1Corinthians 1:21** when he wrote,

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Now notice what Paul says is the one single Method by which God saves those who (already) believe:

... through the foolishness of the message preached ...

So, three things in this Passage are very important to understand:

- The Way God has chosen to change hearts and save souls is “**foolishness**” to the lost world
- The Way of Salvation is a “**Message**”
- That Message must be “**Preached**”

... let's look at all three.

1. The Way God has chosen to change hearts and save souls- is “foolishness” to the lost world

Now God *could* have chosen to change the hearts of fallen and sinful people and save them by and through somebody performing Signs and Wonders and Miracles. But He didn't. The Bible teaches very clearly that human minds and hearts are NOT converted because we see or receive Miracles.

Look, if there were any people who could have been converted by Miracles and Signs and Wonders- it should have been the ancient Jew. The average Jew of Moses' day saw more Miracles and more Signs and Wonders than the rest of the entire world combined- and yet they died by the thousands in the Wilderness. Why?

Hebrews 3:17b

... they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

And this proves to us that, the Sin Nature that every human born after Adam has, is so deep-seated; so pervasive; so all-encompassing- that unless and until God sovereignly opens our blind eyes; and unstops our deaf ears; and until God sovereignly and graciously takes out of us that stony heart and replaces it with a heart of flesh- nobody will hear the Gospel; nobody will be convicted of his own Sin; nobody will believe; nobody will

repent; and nobody will be saved.

And yet people are saved. How? Every soul that is saved- is saved because of two things:

- People are saved “by” God’s Grace
- People are saved “through” the Gift of “Saving Faith”

Ephesians 2:8&9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

So, everyone who has had the Grace of God *initiate* the New Birth; and everyone who has been *gifted* with “Saving Faith”- is saved. Because the New Birth- the sovereign giving of New Life- opens our eyes and unstops our ears- so we may hear the Gospel. And the gracious Gift of Saving Faith grants to us the ability to believe; and to hope; and to trust in Jesus *personally*- and in what He alone has done.

So, because we are fallen; and are therefore “**dead in trespasses and sins**” (**Ephesians 2:1**)- God alone- has to *initiate* Salvation all by Himself in giving us “new spiritual Life” (the New Birth). And because we are sinners- God sovereignly must grant to us the Gift of “Saving Faith” so we may have faith and believe. But how is all this carried out?

As the Word of Christ is preached- God sovereignly gives the wicked rebel new spiritual Life. This is the Miracle of the New Birth. And part and parcel in the New Birth are three things:

- Eyes that can see
- Ears that can hear
- A heart that can believe

So, with those new eyes- the sinner sees the Beauty and the Glory of the risen Christ. But he also sees the great contrast between the “Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ” (**2Corinthians 4:6**)- and his own wicked heart and Sin. And the result of seeing both Jesus and himself- *correctly*- the elected sinner is utterly *devastated* with true, Conviction- empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

And with those new ears- he hears.

Romans 10:17

So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

So, the Miracle is carried out in both the ear and in the mind of the lost sinner. And, as the Word of Christ is fully and correctly heralded- God sovereignly grants this unsaved but chosen person- the Gift of Saving Faith. And with that new soft heart of flesh- this person has been gifted with the ability to now believe the Gospel.

But the word that was translated in **1Corinthians 1:21** as “foolishness” does NOT mean that kind of foolishness that is silly or funny. No, this comes from a Greek word (*mooria*; Strongs #3472) that means: *something so utterly absurd that it merits nothing but ridicule, scorn, and complete rejection.*

So, what we preach MUST fit this description. Whatever we herald MUST be “foolishness” to the lost world. If what we preach is attractive to the pagan world- then it is NOT what God can use to grant Faith to the hearer. The Message we preach must be something so utterly absurd to the lost world- that it merits nothing but ridicule, scorn and complete rejection by those who hate Jesus. What God gave Joel to preach- was *very* foolish.

2. The Way God changes hearts and saves souls is a “Message”

The definition of “Message” is a: *“significant theme- especially one that has an important impact.”* When we preach- what we say is a “Message” from God. It should NEVER be a Message from Man- because whatever Man says can’t forgive a single Sin or save a single soul. Our Message must be clear and precise. It should never be cloudy or vague. When we cry out- what we cry should be heard and listened to by those with an ear to hear and a heart to believe.

But we can’t preach what we don’t know. And we can’t preach what we ourselves don’t believe. And we can’t preach what we have not first heard. So, by default- BEFORE we preach- we must receive. We, who preach, must go to the Book; and we must labor over; agonize over it; struggle over it- so that we may get the one single Message that God put into each and every verse. And we must do this- with a realization that, unless the Message we get is from God- people will perish.

And that means that BEFORE we preach- we must examine our own hearts to make sure that we believe what we say. And BEFORE we preach-

we must make sure that what we say- comes from God and not from ourselves.

God gave Joel a very significant theme that had and that *continues* to have an important impact of both Jew and Gentile.

3. That Message Must be “Preached”

Real, biblical Preaching is in such short supply these days that it is important that we define just what Preaching is- before we engage in it. Preaching is not conversation. Preaching is not discussion. Preaching is not casual talk about religious things. Preaching is not simply Teaching. Preaching is the *heralding* of the Message of God that is permeated by the sense of God’s Greatness and Majesty and Holiness. The Topic may be anything under the sun- but it must always be brought into the blazing Light of God’s Greatness and Majesty and Holiness in His Word.

We must understand that God did not ordain the Cross of Christ or create the Lake of Fire in order to communicate the *insignificance* of belittling His Glory. The screams of the Son of God on the Cross and the screams of unrepentant human beings in Hell- are the loudest shouts under Heaven that God is infinitely Holy; and that Sin is infinitely offensive; and that God’s Wrath is infinitely Just; and that Grace is infinitely Precious. And the life of every single person on earth leads to everlasting Joy or everlasting Suffering. And so, our Preaching **MUST** carry the weightiness and the seriousness of these things to God’s people.

God ordained for His Own Son to be crucified (**The Revelation 13:8; 2Timothy 1:9**) and for Hell to be frightening and terrible (**Matthew 25:41**) so that we would have the clearest witnesses possible to what is at stake when we preach.

And what gives Preaching its seriousness and its impact- is that the Mantle of the Preacher is soaked with the Blood of Jesus and singed with the fire of Hell. And that’s the Mantle that turns mere “talkers” into “preachers”. Yet tragically some of the most prominent Evangelical voices of our day- work hard to *diminish* the Horror of both the Cross and Hell- by stripping the first one of its Power to bear our Punishment and stripping the other one of its fearsomeness- by either ignoring its existence or equating the frightening Lake of Fire with having “low expectations” or a “bad hair day.”

Many years ago, as I laid before the Lord in a season of fasting and

prayer- God made me to understand in no uncertain terms that He *refuses* to simply be discussed or analyzed or examined by His creatures. No, God expects we Preachers to *herald* Him; to *exalt* Him; to *proclaim* Him; to *wonder* after Him; and to *worship* Him! And I would suggest to you that unless God is *heralded*; unless He is *exalted*; unless God is *proclaimed* and *wondered after*- He is really NOT being worshipped at all.

So, as we “journey” through the Prophecy of Joel- let us do more than simply trying to figure out his symbolism and his signs. But may we hear this Prophet as he heralds; and exalts; and proclaims; and wonders after the greatness and the majesty and the Holiness of God. And may we realize that EVERYTHING in this Book- EVERYTHING- either *directly* or *indirectly*- has to do with Jesus, the Christ.

A “Journey”

My effort to go through the Prophecy of Joel will be like a Journey. And so, as we climb over the lofty mountains of Joel’s vision of God; and as we slush through the deep and rain soaked valleys of the Prophet’s understanding of future events- let us realize that, like all of us, Joel was a sinner saved by Grace. Joel didn’t keep the Law of Moses. He broke that Law every day of his life. And so, Joel needed the Grace that had saved him.

We must also realize that Joel didn’t see *everything* about God or the future. And that means that he didn’t understand *everything* about God and the future. Joel’s Prophecy was but a *part* of a much larger mosaic of the Beauty and the Grandeur of the Owner and Creator of the Universe. So, keep in mind that Joel was blind to many things about God- that we already know to be true. And he was ignorant about many things about the future- that we already love and use every day.

Now there is very little that we know or understand about this man, named, “Joel”. We know that the Hebrew language doesn’t have any “J’s” in it. So, his name has been “anglicanized” for our use. So, “Joel” was actually “Yo-el”. And his name combines the Covenant Name of God (YHWH or Yahweh) and “El”- which also means: “God”. So, the Prophet’s name means: “YHWH is God” or “One to Whom YHWH is God” or “A Worshipper of God”.

Now the Prophet tells us that he was the son of a man named, “Pethuel”, which doesn’t help us very much- since we don’t know who

“Pethuel” was.

But Joel demonstrates a vibrant zeal for the Temple sacrifices. For example, he said this in **Joel 1:9**:

The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off From the house of the Lord. The priests mourn, The ministers of the Lord.

... and he said this in **Joel 2:12-16**:

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

... but he *seems* to be *familiar* with both Pastoral and agricultural life and *seems* to have been separated from the other Priests. For example, he said this in **Joel 1:13&14**:

Gird yourselves *with sackcloth* And lament, O priests; Wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth O ministers of my God, For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders *And* all the inhabitants of the land To the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

... and this in **Joel 2:17**:

Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

... which allows me to think that he was NOT a Levite. But as we hear this man prophesy- he hints that he was probably from the region around

Jerusalem and was from the Tribe of Judah.

Now it is hard to date this Book. There aren't any mentions of other nations like Assyria or Babylon or Persia which would help. Most scholars suggest that he was used by God some 800 years before Jesus was born (9th Century BC). But Joel mentions Judah's Suffering when he said,

Joel 3:19

Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood.

... and he also mentions the Temple in **Joel 1:14**

Consecrate a fast, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders *And* all the inhabitants of the land To the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

... and this *may* mean that his Ministry was carried out immediately *after* the Babylonian Captivity (around 586BC). So, it is *possible* that Joel prophesied during the same time-frame as Ezra and Nehemiah. But dating this Book is not really important anyway- because the Message of this Book- is timeless.

Now what is interesting is that Joel either quotes from or alludes to many other Books of the Bible like **Isaiah; Amos; Zephaniah; Nahum; Obadiah; Ezekiel; Malachi**; and even the Book of **Exodus**. And another interesting feature is that Joel never accuses Israel of any specific Sin.

So, like many of the other Prophets- Joel heralds the terrifying News that God's Judgment is "Coming" to confront Israel's Sin- but he never says *why* or what particular Sin God is going to judge. Now, many scholars have given their ideas about *why* this was- but one thing we shouldn't ignore is- that Joel may have *assumed* that whoever reads his Prophecy would have been as well-versed in the Old Testament Scriptures as he was. And if true- then they would have understood *why* God was judging Israel- based on what all the other Prophets spoke.

So, because Joel may have been familiar with the Books that had already been written- two things would have been true:

- He understood why God was judging His people
- He had great Hope about the future

... and that should be true about us, as well. Nobody who reads the Bible should ever be puzzled as to why God periodically judges His Own people. Now we don't live in a time when the Nation of Israel represents God's people. We live in a time when the Church represents God's people. And so, periodically, God "judges"- His Own Church in a *sanctifying* and *correcting* way. And if we are spending time in God's Word- that should never bother us. The Mystery is NOT that God periodically disciplines His Own people. The Mystery is why God doesn't utterly destroy us. But look what the writer of **Hebrews** taught about this sanctifying and correcting Judgment from **Hebrews 12:3-13**:

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "*MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.*" It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

So, when anyone asks us *why* a Good and loving God would "judge" or "correct" or "chastise" or "discipline" His Own people- who are already saved and whom God has set His Love upon- we should always respond:

THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. [And God] *disciplines us*

for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

So, God's Judgment in our Discipline- is a demonstration of God's Love to us. And the fact that some don't see it that way- only shows that they either don't know the Bible or don't believe what it says. What would represent "Hate"- is God leaving us alone; and NOT changing us; and NOT correcting us; and NOT disciplining us- thus *preventing* us from sharing in His Own Personal Holiness.

And *without* having a single New Testament Book; *without* being able to examine 2,000 years of Church History; *without* having God the Holy Spirit dwell inside him; and *without* the Life; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus- Joel understood this. So, those of us- who *have* all of these Advantages- we have no excuse for not understanding *why* God periodically judges or corrects or disciplines or chastises His Own people.

But not only did Joel's comprehension of the Old Testament Books give him tremendous insight into why God periodically judges His Own people- they also gave this Prophet great Hope about the future. Joel's Prophecy is NOT gloom and doom. It is filled with Promise and Joy and Hope about what God will do as the days progress.

Now it seems that there is a common Theme running through this whole Book- and Joel *repeats* this Theme over and over again. It is described as "The Day of the Lord". For example,

Joel 1:15

Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel 2:1

Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,

Joel 2:11

The Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Joel 2:31

The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

Joel 3:14

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

Now it is possible that *some* of these references to the “Day of the Lord” is talking about the *same* Event. But even at that- this is the common Theme in this entire Book.

Now in Chapters 1&2- Joel speaks about the “Day of the Lord”. And this is common among the Prophets and it describes Events that happened before any of us existed- when God appeared in a powerful way- to do one of several things- such as:

- Save His people
- Confront Evil
- Bring about Judgment

.. and we can ponder the Plagues that God brought upon Egypt in the Book of Exodus- where God brought Judgment against Sin and Wickedness. And, many times, God’s Prophets likened what God was going to do in the future with these past Events. Also, we should leave open the possibility that what God did in the past- NATURALLY- He is going to do in the future- SPIRITUALLY- such as God NOT simply delivering His people from pagan nations- but delivering His people from their Sins; and saving them from His Own Wrath.

So, for example, at some point in the future- God is going to confront Evil that has been joined with His people and God will shake His people and discipline them and judge them- until the Evil is removed. And this shows us just how serious God is concerning His Passion that His people be a Holy people- who are NOT like the lost unsaved world- that they have been called out from.

The Bible tells us that God is a jealous God- in that He will NOT share us with the pagan world. When the Call of God is on your life- God expects you to live EXCLUSIVELY for Him. And if that bothers you; or if that bores you; or if the fact that God wants you for Himself- then perhaps it is because you really are not called at all and you actually belong with the unsaved

people of the world.

But you can't have it both ways. Either God has called you; and chosen you; and He has saved you; and He has set His Love upon you; and He has forgiven you; and given you His Own Righteousness; and you belong to Him ONLY- and therefore- you are to live your life for His Glory alone- and you will spend all of Eternity in unspeakable Joy- OR- God has NOT called you; He has NOT chosen you; and you DON'T belong to Him; and you are free to live your life according to the dictates of your own heart; and you will spend all of Eternity in unbelievable Punishment with the devil and his angels. But make no mistake about this, dear friends, it is either/or.

So, here in Chapters 1&2- Joel has brought two parallel Poems together that focus on the single Theme of the "Day of the Lord". So, Chapter 1 is about a Past, "Day of the Lord". And he begins by announcing that the recent disaster of a locust swarm that had devastated Israel- is likened unto the "Day of the Lord" back in Egypt with the 8th Plague that came about through the hand of Moses (**Exodus 10**). The difference is that this time- the locusts were NOT sent against an enemy of God's people- but TO God's people.

So, Joel cries out to the Elders and the Priests to lead the people to Repentance and crying out to God for Mercy in Prayer. And like Daniel- Joel joins in with the Prayer and Repentance. So, even though Joel is trying to walk in a godly way before the Lord- he knows that he has sinned as well- and he doesn't exempt himself from this Prayer and Repentance.

Chapter 2 comes along side of this- and it seems to have the very same design and flow- and Joel announces ANOTHER "Day of the Lord". Only this "Day" is NOT past- it is Future. And this "Day of the Lord" speaks of a terrible disaster coming to Jerusalem. And Joel begins describing this future seemingly as yet another swarm of locusts. Yet, this time- that description may be symbolic because he also uses both military and cosmic terms to describe this Plague. And he describes the locusts as "God's Army" like a cavalry and soldiers that are marching and destroying everything in their path.

And in Joel's Vision of this "Day of the Lord"- the Sun is darkened and the earth quakes and Joel says,

Joel 2:30&31

I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before

the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

But then the Prophet says something that makes me think that this is NOT natural at all- but is referring to a great *spiritual* Battle, when he says,

Joel 2:32

And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

...because this part is what the Apostle Peter quoted on the balcony of the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost in **The Acts 2** to speak of Salvation and NOT a natural, earthly Plague and Deliverance.

And so, once again, Joel calls on God's people to pray and repent. And this time- he gets very specific about *how* to pray and repent:

Joel 2:12b-17

... Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

... where he introduces strange activities like a "fast" along with a "Solemn Assembly". Once again- Joel is using what he had read in the **Book of Exodus**.

Then in **Joel 2:18-32** there is a narrative about God's Response to the Repentance that was led by Joel. Joel speaks how God is going to turn from His Judgment and turn to Salvation. And the imagery is one of Restoration and Healing and Deliverance. Only this Passage is also quoted

by the Apostle Peter to refer to the Messiah, Jesus, the Christ and the Birth of the Church in the first Prayer Meeting in the Upper Room.

Now, so far- Joel has weaved a Story of a great Leader (in this case- it is Joel himself)- leading God's people to understand how their Sin has led to disaster and Divine Judgment. And that, with the God of Mercy, there is Hope- IF there can be genuine Repentance.

But in all of these *past* Events- Joel sees an image of a *future* "Day of the Lord". and so, in the final section of His Prophecy- Joel writes three Poems that coincide God's 3-part Response. And he weaves together images from other Prophetic Books and expands it all into an amazing Vision of Hope for God's true people.

So, the first image is a powerful expansion of the Hope of God's Presence among His people- becoming a Promise how that, one day, God's Own Spirit- His Own personal "Presence" will fill- NOT merely the Temple in Jerusalem- but all of His people. And Joel is amplifying the Promises made by Isaiah (32&49) and Jeremiah (31) and Ezekiel (36) about the New Covenant.

Then Joel says that God will confront the Invader (satan) and Joel sees a similarity to the arrogant and violent nations of his day. And using the imagery of Isaiah and Zephaniah and Ezekiel about the future "Day of the Lord" when God will confront Evil among all the nations and turn it on themselves. And he uses the picture of perfect Justice to right all wrongs.

Finally, Joel picks up the images that other Prophets had already given of the earth's Restoration. And here- Joel sees great Hope for some form of "renewal" for all of Creation. And, once again, Joel uses the Promises of Isaiah and Ezekiel and Zechariah to say that God's final "Day" will be a "Day of Justice" and will be followed by a complete Restoration of the entire world- where God's Presence will flow out from Jerusalem like a river. And so, Joel's Prophecy ends with God's Forgiveness and Mercy opening up an entirely new Creation!

This tiny Book of only seventy- three verses teaches deep and profound concepts about how Sin brings about Devastation and Destruction- not only to individuals- but to our entire world. It also teaches how God desires to show Mercy to those who will repent and turn from their sin- no matter how evil they have been.

And all of that leads us to an undefeatable Hope that God is absolutely Sovereign. And so, one day- God will utterly defeat all Evil- both in us and

in our world; and God will have Himself a people- who see the very Presence of God- in the Person of Jesus Christ- as the Treasure of the Universe! So, hold on to your hats- this is going to be quite a Journey!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

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