



Joel - Chapter Two

I [Joel 1:1-2:17 - The Judgement against Judah and the Day of the Lord \(continues/concludes\)](#)

I.b [Joel 1:13-2:17 - A Call to Repentance and Prayer \(continues/concludes\)](#)

Summary of Chapter Two

Joel describes the coming of an army, whose arrival may yet be averted by wholehearted return to the Lord. Verses 1-11 describe the coming of this great army, and vv.12-17 describe the command to return to the Lord.

The Lord answers the prayer of v.17. He restores the reputation of his people (vv.18-20), the land (vv.21-27), and his presence through pouring out his Spirit on all people (vv.28-32). Much of vv.18-32 is spoken by the Lord himself in the first person.

- ¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near —
- ² a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.

Joel 2:1-2

Zion is the place of the Lord's throne. The word generally refers to the temple region but could also signify Jerusalem in its entirety or even the whole Israelite nation.

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble. In Joel Chapter 1, the prophet spoke of the judgement that had arrived in Judah, i.e. a plague of locusts and drought. In Joel Chapter 2, he begins by describing judgement that will come, a mighty army set against Judah. Since this is all part of 'God's day' not 'man's day,' it is described as the day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord is coming. This can refer to either a series of judgements upon the people of God or the final day of judgement when Christ returns. For a fuller explanation refer to the comments made on Joel 1:15.

Darkness recalls the Lord's appearance at Sinai; refer to Exodus 19:16-19, Deuteronomy 4:11 and 5:22-23. God's appearance at Sinai foreshadows his 'day' in the future: *<<Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord! Why do you want the day of the Lord? It is darkness, not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?>> (Amos 5:18-20), and: <<The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness>> (Zephaniah 1:14-15).*

A great and powerful army comes. It is hard to know what invasion Joel predicts. Probably Joel predicted an invasion that never happened because Judah responded to the invitation to repent and God held back this army. The forty year godly reign of King Joash in Judah began right after the time of Joel's prophecy. There are some commentators who believe that Joel is referring back to the army of locusts, and describing them poetically. This is possible, but it seems best on balance to say that he writes of a literal human army that will come against an unrepentant Judah.

- ³ Fire devours in front of them,
and behind them a flame burns.
Before them the land is like the garden of Eden,
but after them a desolate wilderness,
and nothing escapes them.

Joel 2:3

Fire devours, a flame burns. In keeping with biblical imagery regarding God's coming: <<*Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him*>> (Psalm 50:3), and: <<*For the Lord will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to pay back his anger in fury, and his rebuke in flames of fire*>> (Isaiah 66:15), the army is associated with destructive fire; refer to Joel 1:19. The urgent nature of this prophecy probably spurred Jehoiada to depose the wicked Queen Athaliah and set Joash on the throne, even though he was only seven years-old; refer to 2 Kings 11:4-21. Perhaps he would have waited until Joash was older, but Joel's prophecy showed him that it had to be done immediately.

Like the garden of Eden, a desolate wilderness. The destructive power of this <<*great army*>> (v.2), Hebrew 'am rab, can only be compared to the devastation wrought to God's original creation by mankind's fall; refer to Genesis 2:8-10, 3:17-19 and 13:10.

- 4 They have the appearance of horses,
and like warhorses they charge.
- 5 As with the rumbling of chariots,
they leap on the tops of the mountains,
like the crackling of a flame of fire
devouring the stubble,
like a powerful army
drawn up for battle.

Joel 2:4-5

Like horses. Locusts and armies have an analogous appearance, movement, and sound: <<*Do you give the horse its might? Do you clothe its neck with mane? Do you make it leap like the locust? Its majestic snorting is terrible*>> (Job 39:19-20), and: <<*Raise a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations; prepare the nations for war against her, summon against her the kingdoms, Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her, bring up horses like bristling locusts*>> (Jeremiah 51:27); both are used by Joel to capture the presence of the ultimate powerful army, literally, 'mighty people' (Hebrew 'am 'atsum).

- 6 Before them peoples are in anguish,
all faces grow pale.
- 7 Like warriors they charge,

like soldiers they scale the wall.

Each keeps to its own course,
they do not swerve from their paths.

⁸ They do not jostle one another,
each keeps to its own track;
they burst through the weapons
and are not halted.

⁹ They leap upon the city,
they run upon the walls;
they climb up into the houses,
they enter through the windows like a thief.

Joel 2:6-9

Each keeps to its own course, they do not swerve; they do not jostle. With a chilling poetic flair, Joel describes the discipline and effectiveness of this army. Because they keep ranks and work with energy, i.e. they leap upon the city, they bring a devastating attack on Judah. This army cannot be thwarted from its assigned course as every member of the unified ranks advances: <<*None of them is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps, not a loincloth is loose, not a sandal-thong broken*>> (Isaiah 5:27). It executes its actions (leap, run, climb, enter) at will, moving from outside to inside (city, walls, houses, windows).

If the people of God are considered to be like an army, perhaps based on the military images Paul sprinkled throughout his letters, then this passage shows two things that can make God's people more effective. First they must keep order, with every soldier keeping ranks. Second they must work hard, with every soldier serving with energy.

¹⁰ The earth quakes before them,
the heavens tremble.
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.

Joel 2:10

The earth quakes before them is literally 'before him' as in v.3 and v.6.

Quakes, tremble, darkened. Only the day of the Lord could produce this 'cosmic shakedown.' In many cases in the prophets, the Hebrew verb *ra'ash*, here

translated tremble, was associated with the end of the age, the return of chaos, and God's final judgement; refer to Isaiah 13:13 and 24:18, Jeremiah 4:23-24, Amos 8:8-9, Nahum 1:5, Haggai 2:6, and 2:21, Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24.

¹¹ The Lord utters his voice
at the head of his army;
how vast is his host!
Numberless are those who obey his command.
Truly the day of the Lord is great;
terrible indeed – who can endure it?

Joel 2:11

The Lord utters his voice. As impressive as this army is, Joel does not want Judah to forget that it is real power lies in that God has sent them. They will be his tool of judgement against Judah, unless they repent. Thunder is associated with the cosmic events of v.10 and: <<*After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard*>> (Job 37:4), <<*The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice*>> (Psalm 18:13), <<*When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightnings for the rain, and he brings out the wind from his storehouses*>> (Jeremiah 10:13), and: <<*Father, glorify your name.*' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine'>> (John 12:28-30).

When the plague of locusts and the drought devastated Judah, it might be thought that Joel would encourage the people. He might have said, "Hang in there! Things are bad, but they will get better. Tough times do not last, but tough people do." Instead Joel said, "You think that was bad? Worse is to come if we do not repent."

At the head of his army. The force that brings such dread and terror is under God's command. This is not surprising as everything is under God's command: <<*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it*>> (Psalm 24:1).

Numberless are those who obey his command. This not only describes the army that will come upon Judah but it also invokes imagery of the throne room in heaven: <<*Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, 'Worthy is the*

Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!>> (Revelation 5:11-12).

- 12 Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
- 13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

Joel 2:12-13

Yet even now return to me. There is still time for the people to return to the Lord, that is, to repent of their coldness towards him. Because they heard the warning of judgement, God's people should repent. It does not make their repentance less valid because they had to be 'scared' into it. The important thing is that they turn back to the Lord in sincerity, and God tells them how. Sincere repentance is to turn to God, and therefore away from sin.

God calls for undivided devotion. Sincere repentance is achieved only with all your heart, giving everything in surrender to God.

Sincere repentance is marked by action (with fasting) and emotion (with weeping, and with mourning). Not every act of repentance will include fasting and weeping, but if *action* and *emotion* are absent, it is not real repentance.

Rend your hearts is an expression of internal anguish. This command, coupled with the wholehearted devotion prescribed in v.12, echoes Deuteronomy 30:6, where a circumcised heart is one that loves God completely. One expression of mourning in Jewish culture is tearing the clothes. It was a way to say, "I am so overcome with grief that I do not care if my clothes are ruined and I look bad." Joel knew that one could tear their garments without tearing their heart, and he describes the kind of heart-repentance that really pleases God.

For he is gracious and merciful. God's unchanging character, described in Exodus 34:6-7 and throughout Scripture, is the grounds for his people's repentance. Knowing the goodness and mercy of God is another motive for true repentance. Christians come to him confident that he will heal and forgive, and that he may relent from the judgement he announced. They do not repent with the idea "God is so mean that if I do not return to him, he will crush me." Instead the idea is "God is so gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness that he will spare me from what I deserve if I turn back to him." Ultimately, it is his goodness

that leads to repentance: <<*Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realise that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*>> (Romans 2:4).

14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain-offering and a drink-offering
for the Lord, your God?

Joel 2:14

Who knows? The sovereign God acts according to his own purposes. The Assyrians in Nineveh made a similar statement when they faced destruction at the hands of God: <<*Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish*>> (Jonah 3:9).

Turn and relent. The language leaves open the possibility that the Lord, in keeping with his revealed character will bring blessing instead of disaster. Again, this is seen as the outcome in Nineveh: <<*He prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing*>> (Jonah 4:2). However, Jonah's prayer was offered in anger as he did not feel that the Assyrians were deserving of God's grace!

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
16 gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.

Joel 2:15-16

Blow the trumpet in Zion. The trumpet is a bugle of beaten silver. Along with the horn, it was used to alert the community to danger and summon it to a religious festival. The trumpet will also announce the second coming of Christ: <<*For the*

Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first>> (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Sanctify a fast. OT fasts were undertaken as a sign of mourning, repentance, humility, and as a means of seeking God's help, guidance, or forgiveness.

Call a solemn assembly. The call is for God's people to come together and repent for all are guilty and must repent of their own sins.

Sanctify the congregation. As in 1:14, every segment of the religious community assembles for worship, readying themselves to call upon the Lord with a fast. Even nursing infants still being breast-fed and newlyweds are not exempt.

Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. In addition to the same pattern of repentance he presented in 1:14, Joel adds the ideas relevant to the bridegroom and the bride. The idea with these images is that in a time of repentance God's people cannot carry on as usual. Usually the bridegroom belongs in his chamber and the bride belongs in her dressing room, but not now, it is time to repent. True repentance does not carry on with business as usual.

17 Between the vestibule and the altar
 let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep.
 Let them say, 'Spare your people, O Lord,
 and do not make your heritage a mockery,
 a byword among the nations.
 Why should it be said among the peoples,
 "Where is their God?"'

Joel 2:17

The place of prayer was between the entrance hall to the temple, i.e. the vestibule or portico, and the altar.

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Leaders among God's people must especially lead in repentance. They cannot come with the attitude that it is only the people who must repent. They must regard themselves as the people and the people as themselves and lead in repentance.

Spare your people is an appeal to God's covenantal care for his people. Joel puts a rich prayer of repentance into the mouths of God's priests. It as if the priests should pray with the thought, "How can we persuade God to have mercy on us?" Spare implies that God's people deserve judgement, but they plead for mercy; whereas, your people reminds God that they belong to him, and provides another motivation for his mercy.

Do not make your heritage a mockery. This tells God that mercy unto his people will bring him glory among the nations and that judgement may bring his name into disrepute: <<*Now if you kill this people all at one time, then the nations who have heard about you will say, "It is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land he swore to give them that he has slaughtered them in the wilderness"*>> (Numbers 14:15-16).

A byword means a proverb or common saying, often used in scorn. An alternative translation is 'to rule over them', which makes sense if a foreign, human invasion is in view.

"Where is their God?" is a mocking question from those who doubt that God defends his people: <<*Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes*>> (Psalm 79:10), and: <<*Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'*>> (Psalm 115:2).

II Joel 2:18-3:21 - The Mercy of the Lord and Judgement against the Nations

The second part of Joel is signalled by the appearance in 2:18 of the Hebrew narrative tense for the first time in the book. After judgement God will restore the fortunes of his people and will punish the nations that had opposed them.

II.a Joel 2:18-27 - God's Response and Promise

These verses underline the gracious and merciful nature of God. Despite the iniquity of his people he still pours out his love upon them and the land he gave them. There will again be a time of abundance in the land.

¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land,
and had pity on his people.

Joel 2:18

Then the Lord became jealous for his land. Judah could know that when God's people sincerely repent, he notices from heaven. His zeal and pity are then turned for his people. Jealousy here is a deep devotion that leads the Lord to intervene, saving his people for the sake of his own glory: <<*Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name*>> (Ezekiel 39:25), <<*So the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim this message: Thus says the Lord of hosts; I am very jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion*>> (Zechariah 1:14), and: <<*Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath*>> (Zechariah 8:2).

19 In response to his people the Lord said:
I am sending you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a mockery among the nations.

Joel 2:19

In response to his people. The Lord hears the prayers of his people.

I am sending you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied. God promised to restore material prosperity and thus spiritual joy, to a repentant Judah: <<*You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound*>> (Psalm 4:7).

20 I will remove the northern army far from you,
and drive it into a parched and desolate land,
its front into the eastern sea,
and its rear into the western sea;
its stench and foul smell will rise up.
Surely he has done great things!

Joel 2:20

The northern army may be the locusts, an invading army, or a final apocalyptic enemy of Israel. Arguments for the third option include:

1. Reference to locusts as the ‘northerner’ would be unusual, as they typically came from the south or the east.
2. Jeremiah and Ezekiel portray a great enemy coming from the north; refer to Jeremiah 1:14-15, 4:6, 6:1, and 6:22-23; and Ezekiel 23:24, 26:7, 38:6, 38:15, and 39:2.
3. The words its front and its rear, literally, ‘his face’ and ‘his end’, show that destruction is complete and final.

The eastern sea and the western sea refer to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean respectively.

21 Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the Lord has done great things!

Joel 2:21

Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Joel looks forward to the restoration that God has promised, and he tells Judah to look forward in faith, as did Abraham: <<*For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God*>> (Hebrews 11:10), and to praise God for the restoration he promises, even before they see it with their own eyes. Ironically, the foul smell of corpses in v.20 is all that remains of the great deeds of this enemy: <<*Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood*>> (Isaiah 34:3). This contrasts with the great things done by the Lord, whose acts of salvation form the basis of the command to not fear.

22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

Joel 2:22

The pastures of the wilderness are green. With the eye of faith, Joel can already see it happening. All around him are the lush, fruitful pastures and trees that God has restored after the destruction of the locusts. The underlying Hebrew verb describing the colour, *dasha'*, is found elsewhere in Scripture only in: <<*God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, Every sort of fruit-bearing tree*>> (Genesis 1:11 MSG), and is most often translated as vegetation. Perhaps Joel wants his readers to envisage the restoration of the land to an Eden-like state (v.3).

23 O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the Lord your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.

24 The threshing-floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

Joel 2:23-24

For he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain. At the end of Joel Chapter 1, the prophet saw the destruction that drought brought upon the land. Now with the eye of faith he sees God restoring both the early and later rain to Israel. Ancient Israel had no irrigation

system, and relied on rain to water their crops. In a time of drought, nothing grew. God promises to restore both the early rain in autumn and the later rain in spring. When God restores these rains, Judah will have full threshing floors and wine vats.

The early rain is Hebrew *Hammoreh*, and vindication is Hebrew *litsdaqah*. The clause by itself can also be understood as 'the teacher (Hebrew *Hammoreh*) for righteousness,' a figure mentioned in the Qumran Scrolls of the Dead Sea. However, the word *moreh* in the final line of v.23 clearly means early rain, and thus the context supports the translation.

This passage along with others such as: *<<then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil>> (Deuteronomy 11:14), and: <<Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth>> (Hosea 6:3),* were taken to give the name of the 'Latter Rain Movement' which started in 1948. In 1948, a Oneness Pentecostal minister named William Branham held meetings at an orphanage and school founded by a Foursquare Church in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada. Those attending the meeting were so impressed by the supernatural works, healing, prophecy, word of knowledge, and strange phenomenon, that they considered it a beginning of a new work of God on earth. In their newsletter, this is how they described it: "All the great outpourings of the past have had their outstanding truths. Luther's truth was Justification by Faith. Wesley's was Sanctification. The Baptists taught the pre-millennial coming of Christ. The Missionary Alliance taught Divine Healing. The Pentecostal outpouring has restored the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to its rightful place. But the next great outpouring is going to be marked by all these other truths plus such a demonstration of the nine gifts of the Spirit as the world, not even the Apostolic world, has ever witnessed before. This revival will be short and will be the last before the Rapture of the Church." They felt that the Pentecostal denominations of their day were 'dead' and 'dry,' and needed the blessing of the 'Latter Rain,' which would especially be marked by miraculous signs and supernatural works. The Pentecostal denominations, notably the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church denounced the Branham and the Latter Rain movement for both their teaching and practices. William Branham continued, drawing large crowds to his prophecy and healing crusades. He and a young evangelist named Oral Roberts led the Latter Rain Movement for several years. Branham's doctrine became more and more aberrant. Branham believed that the Word of God was given in three forms: the Zodiac, the Egyptian pyramids, and the written scriptures. He also taught the 'serpent seed' doctrine, which was based on his interpretation of Genesis 3:13, saying that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The Latter Rain Movement, as led by William Branham and Oral Roberts eventually faded from prominence. Branham himself died in a road traffic collision with a drunk driver in 1965. He died on Christmas Eve, and his faithful followers believed that he would rise

from the dead, so they delayed his burial for several days. But the influence of the Latter Rain movement lived on. The Latter Rain popularised many attitudes and doctrines popular in revival movements today. Many researchers, and many within these modern groups today, believe that many modern 'revival' movements are really just a continuation of the Latter Rain movement. Movements such as 'Joel's Army,' the Manifest Sons of God, the Dominion Movement, the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing, and the Pensacola Revival are connected in some way to the Latter Rain movement. For example, Paul Cain, later to re-emerge as head of the Kansas City Prophets in 1989, travelled with William Branham and called him 'the greatest prophet that ever lived.' The modern Latter Rain movement believes: "The Latter Rain is God's great end-time ministry. This concept as revealed in the Bible, comprises the restitution of the church to its rightful place, the enormous last day revival and the harvest of souls before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh promised to us in the last days and the restoration of apostolic and prophetic gifts."

Throughout history there have always been groups of people who come up with ideas that hype up the message of the Gospel. Most people would be advised to base their own faith on sound biblical teaching and the experience of their own personal relationship with God. God will make himself known in the hearts of those who earnestly seek him and have no other desire than to serve God in the name of Jesus.

²⁵ I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.

Joel 2:25

The years that the swarming locust has eaten. Being human often means bearing loss never to be regained, and yet the Lord, the bringer of the calamity: <<***Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil***>> (Psalm 90:15), is also the Lord of mercy and abundant grace who is fully able to recompense: I will repay to you.

Charles Spurgeon wrote: "It will strike you at once that the locusts did not eat the years: the locusts ate the fruits of the years' labour, the harvests of the fields; so that the meaning of the restoration of the years must be the restoration of those fruits and of those harvests which the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time; but there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours."

My great army, which I sent against you. As in v.11 and elsewhere, e.g. Amos 4:6-13, those whom the Lord uses to judge his people are under his authority.

²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never
again be put to shame.

Joel 2:26

And my people shall never again be put to shame. The promise of God is that the church will be not be shamed but will be rewarded with eternal life in his presence: <<*It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death*>> (Philippians 1:20), <<*For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame'*>> (1 Peter 2:6), <<*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming*>> (1 John 2:28).

²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again
be put to shame.

Joel 2:27

You shall know. The great purpose of the nation's trauma is for them to know God's presence, that he is the covenant-keeping God, and that he will remove their shame.

I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other is recognition of God's covenantal bond with Israel; refer to Exodus 6:7, Deuteronomy 5:6, Isaiah 43:3, and Ezekiel 20:5. The perpetual removal of shame unites God's provision with his presence and peerless nature.

II.b Joel 2:28-3:8 - God's Spirit Poured Out

Some past Jewish interpreters understood this passage to be referring to the messianic age. The early church followed this line of thinking, as Peter quoted this passage on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:17-21.

²⁸ Then afterwards
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;

your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

Joel 2:28-29

Afterwards refers to a time after the assurances of vv.18-27 and a time that is parallel with in those days.

I will pour out my spirit. The abundant, life-giving rains (v.23), which God will shower on his people, illustrate the way in which God will pour out his Spirit on his people in the future: <<*For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring*>> (Isaiah 44:3), <<*and I will never again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God*>> (Ezekiel 39:29).

On all flesh. All God's people will experience the outpouring of the Spirit and intimate communication with the Lord. The sign of this outpouring will be that not just a few but all (sons and daughters, old and young, male and female, and slaves) will prophesy, dream dreams and see visions.

This outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was a new and revelatory experience for the church. However, there are occasions in the OT where people had the Spirit of God upon them for a specific time and a specific purpose:

- Joseph was filled with the Spirit of God (Genesis 41:38).
- The craftsmen who built the tabernacle were filled with the Spirit of God (Exodus 31:3).
- Joshua was filled with the Spirit of God (Numbers 27:18).
- Othniel was filled with the Spirit of God (Judges 3:10).
- Gideon was filled with the Spirit of God (Judges 6:34).
- Jephthah was filled with the Spirit of God (Judges 11:29).
- Samson was filled with the Spirit of God (Judges 13:5, 14:6, 14:19 and 15:14).
- Saul was filled with the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 10:9-10).
- David was filled with the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 16:13).

There were those during NT times that were filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost for their ministry, i.e. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), his mother Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), his father Zechariah (Luke 1:67), and the old man Simeon who held the infant Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:25).

This prophecy of Joel was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples gathered in the upper room, waiting in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised would come: *<<While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'>>* (Acts 1:4-5). When the outpouring of the Spirit came, the one hundred and twenty disciples of Jesus were all filled with the Spirit and began to praise God in other tongues. Jerusalem was crowded at that time, because of the Festival of Pentecost, so a crowd quickly gathered because of the commotion. Those who heard the disciples praise God in these miraculous languages began to mock them, claiming they were drunk. Peter stood up and boldly set the record straight: the disciples were not drunk at all, but this was a fulfilment of Joel's great prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit. At first, any Jew would scoff at the idea of one hundred and twenty disciples of a crucified man being filled with the Holy Spirit. Based on their understanding of the OT they would think, "These one hundred and twenty people are not kings or prophets or priests; God only pours out his Spirit on special people for special duties. These are common people, and God does not pour out his Spirit on them." Peter uses the prophecy of Joel to show them that things are different now, just as God said they would be. Now, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all who believe and receive, even the common people. Now God offered a New Covenant relationship, and part of the New Covenant was the outpouring of the Spirit for all who receive in faith. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost also shows that there is never any disparity between the work of the Spirit and the work of the Word. When Peter was filled with the Spirit of God in the midst of miraculous signs and wonders as he had never experience before, what did he do? He said, "Let's open up the Scriptures to the Book of Joel." In effect, he held a Bible study, one that both taught the one hundred and twenty disciples so they better understood their experience according to the Scriptures, and called the lost to salvation.

It should also be noticed that Peter's application was exactly the same as the application made by the Prophet Joel: repent. Joel said: *<<Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God>>* (vv.12-13a). Peter said: *<<Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit>>* (Acts 2:38).

Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. In this latter time, all the servants of the Lord will be filled with his Spirit in this unique and powerful way. Under the New Covenant, every believer can receive the full measure of the Spirit, and be used in a special and wonderful way. Sometimes the common churchgoer simply wants a building to worship in, a nice service that is not too offensive, and a good sermon, after that he thinks 'leave me alone'.

That is not New Covenant Christianity, which sees the work of the ministry as belonging to the people, not the clergy. Some people have taken this idea and run too far with it saying, “Therefore we do not need ministers or clergy. We believe in the priesthood of all believers, so there is no room for offices of any kind in the church.” This ignores the clear teaching of Scripture, which says that the work of the ministry belongs to all the people of God, but the work of equipping the saints belongs to God-appointed offices and ministries; refer to Ephesians 4:7-16. It is because the ministry belongs to all Christians that God has appointed offices and ministries to equip every saint to fulfil their role. Acts 2:42-47 describes a wonderful fulfilment of this ideal.

³⁰ I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

Joel 2:30-31

Universal portents related to the day of the Lord are war-like activities on earth, i.e. fire and columns of smoke, and unnatural events in the sky, that is darkness during daylight hours; refer to Isaiah 13:10, Joel 2:10, Joel 3:15, and Amos 8:9. Some interpreters hold that these events of judgement, which did not take place at Pentecost; refer to the comments made on Acts 2:17 and 2:19-21, will still take place sometime in the future, at the Second Coming of Christ. These interpreters hold that OT prophecies should often be understood in terms of both a near-term and a long-term fulfilment, with some long-term events being fulfilled when Jesus brought the good news of salvation at his First Coming, but with other long-term events being fulfilled when he will return in judgement at his Second Coming. Other interpreters hold that the language used here should be understood as prophetic symbolism for God’s judgement, and that no specific literal fulfilment is intended.

On the Day of Pentecost, the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, but not consummated. Peter rightly saw that this was a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God, given freely upon all who believe and receive, as was promised in the New Covenant; refer to Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:24-28. The prophecy of Joel was also especially appropriate because the Day of Pentecost ushered in the last days, with history now moving along the edge of the consummation of all things, not rushing towards it as a distant point.

³² Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Joel 2:32

Salvation is extended beyond the devastation caused by the locusts. However, everyone here is not the same as universalism because salvation is conditional as the full clause clearly states.

Calls on the name. This implies exclusive, covenantal worship of the only God who is able to save; refer to Psalm 116:4, Proverbs 18:10, and Isaiah 44:5-8. Paul quotes this in Romans 10:13 because he, along with other Christians, understood these verses to describe events in the messianic age, when Jews and Gentiles alike shall be saved.

The words as the Lord has said may refer to Isaiah 4:3, Joel 2:27, or Obadiah 17.

Those who escape are parallel to the survivors whom the Lord calls. Those whom the Lord calls are those who respond by calling on his name: <<*He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord*>> (Genesis 13:3-4).