

Comments on Joel 2

This chapter brings to the forefront the theme of the Day of the Lord, which was alluded to in the previous chapter. The first half (v. 1-14) tells of Jerusalem being overrun by an army so powerful nothing can stop them, and the people being humiliated by it. The second half (v. 15-32) tells of the repentance of the people, their contrition, reconciliation, and subsequent blessing by the Lord. When they do turn back to Him, he vanquishes the invading army and restores Jerusalem.

The text can be arranged as an inverted parallelism where the negative covenant curse of foreign invasion (v. 1-14) is contrasted with repentance and redemption (v. 15-32), as follows:

- A - (v. 1) Sound an alarm...the Day of the Lord cometh
- B - (v. 2a-c) Day of darkness...gloominess...clouds
- C - (v. 2d-5) A great people...devoureth the stubble
- D - (v. 6-10) People shall be much pained...The earth shall quake before them
- E - (v. 11-14) Turn ye even to Me...fasting...weeping
- E - (v. 15-17) Fast, call a solemn assembly...weep
- D - (v. 18-20) Then will the Lord...pity His people...I will remove...the northern army
- C - (v. 21-27) Fear not...I will restore to you
- B - (v. 28-29) Pour out My spirit...dreams...visions
- A - (v. 30-32) Shew wonders...before...the Day of the Lord

1 BLOW ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for [it is] nigh at hand; 2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains:

v1-2c Zion's inhabitants are warned of the coming Day of the Lord (v. 1). This day of visitation of the Lord's anger will be dark and terrible (v. 2a-c).

The darkness on the Day of Lord represents the coming storm, but also represents the spiritual condition of those at Zion. Contrast this with their condition after they repent and the Spirit is poured out on them in v. 28-29.

a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, [even] to the years of many generations. 3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land [is] as the garden of Eden before them,

and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4 The appearance of them [is] as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. 7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and [when] they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

v2d-10 A fierce and terrible army swarms over the land and consumes everything before it (v. 2d-3). The men of this army are powerful soldiers where even the foot soldiers run like horses (v. 4), and each of them is as powerful as a chariot (v. 5). Before them, all people will mourn (v. 6). These soldiers are not poorly trained misfits, but are disciplined machines of war who never break ranks (v. 7) and are seemingly infallible and indestructible (v. 8). There will be no hiding from them as they plunder cities before them and overwhelm everything (v. 9). Nothing on earth can stop them, their power shakes the very foundations of Creation (v. 10).

This description of the invading army is intended to show the Lord has brought them against Israel, and so all opposition to them will be meaningless. Their power and invincibility is in sharp contrast to those ancient armies who came against Israel not by the Lord's design, and so they were poorly organized and easily dispatched (cf. Judges 7).

v3 The reference to the Garden of Eden is to contrast the desolation left behind. The destruction will be so profound and so awful as the army moves onward, the land before it will look like Eden in comparison to what it will look like afterwards.

v7-8 On the description of this invading army, compare Isaiah's description of invading Assyria in Isa. 5:25-30 and also Hab. 1:5-11.

v10 Compare Isa. 13:10.

11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his

camp [is] very great: for [he is] strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD [is] great and very terrible; and who can abide it? 12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye [even] to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he [is] gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14 Who knoweth [if] he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; [even] a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: 16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. 17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where [is] their God?

v11-17 While the Lord is in His anger and has His punishing army poised to destroy Zion (v. 11), even on the brink of destruction the Lord will accept them and protect them if they repent (v. 12-14). Verses 15-17 are presented as the response of the penitent people to the Lord's admonition in v. 12-14. All are summoned to the Temple, especially the priests, to petition the Lord for protection from the heathen.

v11 "his army", the invading force is presented as a tool of the Lord, cp. Isa. 10:5, 15. The Lord uses the wicked to punish the wicked.

"great and very terrible", compare this description to that given by those who survived the destruction in the New Continent after Christ's death in 3 Ne. 8:24-25.

"who can abide it?", in the face of such a formidable army amassed by the Lord, how can anyone possibly survive such an onslaught? The question is answered in v. 12-14.

v13-14 The IV/JST on these verses emphasizes the Lord's desire and willingness to accept them if they will repent.

KJV

13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and

turn unto the LORD your God:

IV/JST

13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and repent, and

turn unto the Lord your God;

for he [is]
gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and
of great kindness, and
repenteth him
of the evil.

14 Who knoweth [if]
he will return and repent, and
leave a blessing behind him;

[even] a meat offering and
a drink offering
unto the LORD your God?

for he is
gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and
of great kindness, and
he will turn away
the evil from you.
14 Therefore repent, and
who knoweth but
he will return and
leave a blessing behind him;
that you may offer
a meat offering, and
a drink offering,
unto the Lord your God?

The IV/JST reads more clearly, removing the statements suggesting the Lord has something to repent of.

v17 The people of besieged Jerusalem appeal to the Lord using the same technique Moses and many subsequent leaders of Israel employed, cp. Exod. 32:11-14, Exod. 33:12-17, Deut. 9:26-29, Ps. 6. They are appealing to the Lord to preserve the sanctity of His own name, as opposed to appealing to Him based upon their own merits.

18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. 19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: 20 But I will remove far off from you the northern [army], and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. 22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first [month]. 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. 26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27 And ye shall know that I [am] in the midst of Israel, and [that] I [am] the LORD your God, and none else: and my people

shall never be ashamed.

v18-27 Those who repent see the famine lifted and the invading army dispatched (v18-20). While they formerly were cursed with drought and famine because of wickedness, the righteous remnant is blessed with bounty (v. 21-27).

This section of text emphasizes the covenant context of the foreign invasion. It was strictly intended to be a means of getting the inhabitants of Zion to repent, and as soon as they do, then the Lord blesses them, cp. Lev. 26:40-42.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

v28-29 With the repentance of the righteous remnant and the elimination of the wicked, the Lord pours out the Spirit on all the people. The darkness of v. 1-2 is replaced by the light of the Spirit.

v30 The wonders are for signs to those who are paying attention, cp. Mark 13:28.

v31 "the moon into blood", an obscure passage which is probably referring to the Temple closure referred to in ch. 1, cp. Amos 8:10. The various Temple ingatherings and feasts all occur on the full moon. If the Temple is sacked and desecrated with profane blood, then one could say the festivals associated with the full moon have been corrupted by blood.

v32 Those who call upon the Lord's name are among the surviving remnant.

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