
JOEL 2: 1 Blow 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 comes, for it is close at hand:

The prophet sounds the alarm of a dreadful calamity, the description of which is most terribly worked up, Joe 2:1-11. Exhortation to repentance, fasting, and prayer, that the Divine judgments may be averted, Joe 2:12-17. God will in due time take vengeance on all the enemies of pure and undefiled religion, Joe 2:18-20. Great prosperity of the Jews subsequent to their return from the Babylonish captivity, Joe 2:21-27. Joel then makes an elegant transition to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, Joe 2:28-30; for so these verses are explained by one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. See Act 2:16-21. Prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which was shortly to follow the opening of the Gospel dispensation, Act 2:31. Promises of safety to the faithful and penitent; promises afterwards remarkably fulfilled to the Christians in their escape to Pella from the desolating sword of the Roman army, Act 2:32.

Verse 1

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion - This verse also shows that the temple was still standing. All assemblies of the people were collected by the sound of the trumpet.

The day of the Lord cometh - This phrase generally means a day of judgment or punishment.

JOEL 2: 2 A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn spreading on the mountains, a great and strong people; there has never been the like, neither will there be any more after them, even to the years of many generations.

Verse 2

A day of darkness, etc - The depredations of the locusts are described from the second to the eleventh verse, and their destruction in the twentieth. Dr. Shaw, who saw locusts in Barbary in 1724 and 1725, thus describes them: - "I never observed the mantes, bald locusts, to be gregarious. But the locusts, properly so called, which are so frequently mentioned by sacred as well as profane writers, are sometimes so beyond expression. Those which I saw in 1724 and 1725 were much bigger than our common grasshopper; and had brown spotted wings, with legs and bodies of a bright yellow. Their first appearance was toward the latter end of March, the wind having been for some time south. In the middle of April their numbers were so vastly increased that, in the heat of the day, they formed themselves into large and numerous swarms; flew in the air like a succession of clouds; and, as the prophet Joel expresses it, (Joe 2:10) they darkened the sun. When the wind blew briskly, so that these swarms were crowded by others, or thrown one upon another, we had a lively idea of that comparison of the psalmist, (Psa 109:23), of being 'tossed up and down as the locust.' In the month of May, when the ovaries of those insects were ripe and turgid, each of these swarms began gradually to disappear; and retired into the Mettijah, and other adjacent plains, where they deposited their eggs. These were no sooner hatched in June, than each of these broods collected itself into a compact body of a furlong or more in square; and, marching immediately forward in the direction of the sea, they let nothing escape them; eating up every thing that was green and juicy, not only the lesser kinds of vegetables, but the vine likewise; the fig tree, the pomegranate, the

palm, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, Joe 1:12; in doing which they kept their ranks like men of war; climbing over, as they advanced, every tree or wall that was in their way. Nay, they entered into our very houses and bedchambers, like so many thieves. The inhabitants, to stop their progress, made a variety of pits and trenches all over their fields and gardens, which they filled with water; or else they heaped up in them heath, stubble, and such like combustible matter, which were severally set on fire upon the approach of the locusts. But this was all to no purpose, for the trenches were quickly filled up, and the fires extinguished, by infinite swarms succeeding one another; while the front was regardless of danger, and the rear pressed on so close, that a retreat was altogether impossible. A day or two after one of these broods was in motion, others were already hatched to march and glean after them; gnawing off the very bark, and the young branches, of such trees as had before escaped with the loss only of their fruit and foliage. So justly have they been compared by the prophet Joel (Joe 2:3) to a great army; who further observes, that 'the land is as the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness.' "Having lived near a month in this manner (like a *μυριοστομον ξιφος*, or sword with ten thousand edges, to which they have been compared), upon the ruin and destruction of every vegetable substance which came in their way, they arrived at their full growth, and threw off their nymph state by casting their outward skin. To prepare themselves for this change, they clung by their hinder feet to some bush, twig, or corner of a stone; and immediately, by using an undulating motion, their heads would first break out, and then the rest of their bodies. The whole transformation was performed in seven or eight minutes, after which they lay for a short time in a torpid and seemingly languishing condition; but as soon as the sun and air had hardened their wings, by drying up the moisture which remained upon them, after casting their sloughs, they reassumed their former voracity, with an addition both of strength and agility. Yet they did not continue long in this state before they were entirely dispersed, as their parents were before, after they had laid their eggs; and as the direction of the marches and flights of them both was always to the northward, and not having strength, as they have sometimes had, to reach the opposite shores of Italy France, or Spain, it is probable they perished in the sea, a grave which, according to these people, they have in common with other winged creatures." - Travels, 4to. edition pp. 187, 188.

A day of darkness - They sometimes obscure the sun. And Thuanus observes of an immense crowd, that "they darkened the sun at mid-day."

As the morning spread upon the mountains - They appeared suddenly: as the sun, in rising behind the mountains, shoots his rays over them. Adanson, in his voyage to Senegal, says: "Suddenly there came over our heads a thick cloud which darkened the air, and deprived us of the rays of the sun. We soon found that it was owing to a cloud of locusts." Some clouds of them are said to have darkened the sun for a mile, and others for the space of twelve miles! See the note on Joe 2:10 (note).

JOEL 2: 3 A fire devours before them, and behind them, a flame burns. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them, a desolate wilderness. Yes, and no one has escaped them.

Verse 3

A fire devoureth before them - They consume like a general conflagration. "They destroy the ground, not only for the time, but burn trees for two years after." Sir Hans Sloane, Nat. Hist. of Jamaica, vol. i., p. 29.

Behind them a flame burneth - "Wherever they feed," says Ludolf, in his History of Ethiopia, "their leavings seem as if parched with fire."

Nothing shall escape them - "After devouring the herbage," says Adanson, "with the fruits and leaves of trees, they attacked even the buds and the very bark; they did not so much as spare the reeds with which the huts were thatched."

JOEL 2: 4 Their appearance is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so do they run.

Verse 4

The appearance of horses - The head of the locust is remarkably like that of the horse; and so Ray on Insects describes them: *Caput oblongum, equi instar, prona spectans* - "They have an oblong head, like to that of a horse, bending downward." On this account the Italians call them *cavaletta*, cavalry. Bochart remarks, from an Arabic writer, that the locusts resemble ten different kinds of animals:

1. The Horse in its head.
2. The Elephant in its eyes.
3. The Bull in its neck.
4. The Stag in its horns.
5. The Lion in its breast.
6. The Scorpion in its belly.
7. The Eagle in its wings.
8. The Camel in its thighs.
9. The Ostrich in its feet. And
10. The Serpent in its tail.

Vid. Hieroz., vol. ii., p. 475, edit. 1692.

But its most prominent resemblance is to the horse, which the prophet mentions; and which the Arabic writer puts in the first place, as being the chief.

JOEL 2: 5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

Verse 5

Like the noise of chariots - Bochart also remarks: - "The locusts fly with a great noise, so as to be heard six miles off, and while they are eating the fruits of the earth, the sound of them is like that of a flame driven by the wind."

Ibid., p. 478.

JOEL 2: 6 At their presence the peoples are in anguish. All faces have grown pale.

Verse 6

All faces shall gather blackness - Universal mourning shall take place, because they know that such a plague is irresistible.

JOEL 2: 7 They run like mighty men. They climb the wall like warriors. They each march in his line, and they don't swerve off course.

Verse 7

Like mighty men - like men of war (and as horsemen, Joe 2:4) - The prophet does not say they are such, but they resemble. They are locusts; but in their operations they are Like the above.

They shall not break their ranks - See the account on Joe 2:2, from Dr. Shaw.

JOEL 2: 8 Neither does one jostle another; they march everyone in his path, and they burst through the defences, and don't break ranks.

Verse 8

They shall not be wounded - They have hard scales like a coat of mail; but the expression refers to the utter uselessness of all means to prevent their depredations. See Shaw's account above.

JOEL 2: 9 They rush on the city. They run on the wall. They climb up into the houses. They enter in at the windows like thieves.

JOEL 2: 10 The earth quakes before them. The heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

Verse 10

The earth shall quake - the heavens shall tremble - Poetical expressions, to point out universal consternation and distress. The earth quaked to see itself deprived of its verdure; the heavens trembled to find themselves deprived of their light.

The sun and the moon shall be dark - Bochart relates that "their multitude is sometimes so immense as to obscure the heavens for the space of twelve miles!" - Ibid. p. 479.

JOEL 2: 11 The LORD thunders his voice before his army; for his forces are very great; for he is strong who obeys his command; for the day of the LORD is great and very awesome, and who can endure it?

Verse 11

The Lord shall utter his voice - Such a mighty force seems as if summoned by the Almighty, and the noise they make in coming announces their approach, while yet afar off.

JOEL 2: 12 "Yet even now," says the LORD, "turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."

Verse 12

Turn ye even to me - Three means of turning are recommended: Fasting, weeping, mourning, i.e., continued sorrow.

JOEL 2: 13 Tear your heart, and not your garments, and turn to the LORD, your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and relents from sending calamity.

Verse 13

Rend your heart - Let it not be merely a rending of your garments, but let your hearts be truly contrite. Merely external worship and hypocritical pretensions will only increase the evil, and cause God to meet you with heavier judgments.

For he is gracious - Good and benevolent in his own nature.

Merciful - Pitying and forgiving, as the effect of goodness and benevolence.

Slow to anger - He is not easily provoked to punish, because he is gracious and merciful.

Of great kindness - Exuberant goodness to all them that return to him.

And repenteth him of the evil - Is ever ready to change his purpose to destroy, when he finds the culprit willing to be saved. See the notes on Exo 34:6, Exo 34:7.

JOEL 2: 14 Who knows? He may turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering to the LORD, your God.

Verse 14

Who knoweth if he will return - He may yet interpose and turn aside the calamity threatened, and so far preserve the land from these ravagers, that there will be food for men and cattle, and a sufficiency of offerings for the temple service. Therefore: -

JOEL 2: 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion! Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly.

Verse 15

Blow the trumpet - Let no time be lost, let the alarm be sounded.

JOEL 2: 16 Gather the people. Sanctify the assembly. Assemble the elders. Gather the children, and those who nurse from breasts. Let the bridegroom go out of his room, and the bride out of her room.

Verse 16

Gather the children - Let all share in the humiliation, for all must feel the judgment, should it come. Let no state nor condition among the people be exempted. The elders, the young persons, the infants, the bridegroom, and the bride; let all leave their houses, and go to the temple of God.

JOEL 2: 17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare your people, LORD, and don't give your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them.

Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Verse 17

Let the priests - weep between the porch and the altar - The altar of burnt-offerings stood before the porch of the temple, 2Chr 8:12, and between them there was an open space of fifteen or twenty cubits. It was there that the priests prostrated themselves on such occasions. It was into this place that the priests brought the sacrifice or victim of atonement; and where the high priest laid his hands on the head of the victim confessing his sins.

Let them say - The following was the form to be used on this occasion, "Spare thy people," etc. And if this be done with a rent heart, etc., "then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people," 2Chr 8:18. He will surely save, if ye seriously return to and penitently seek him.

JOEL 2: 18 Then the LORD was jealous for his land, And had pity on his people.

JOEL 2: 19 The LORD answered his people, "Behold, I will send you grain, new wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied with them; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.

 Verse 19

Yea, the Lord will answer - It is not a peradventure; it will surely be done; if ye seek God as commanded, ye will find him as promised.

I will send you corn and wine - He will either prevent the total ravaging of the land, or so bless it with extraordinary vegetable strength, that ye shall have plentiful crops.

JOEL 2: 20 But I will remove the northern army far away from you, and will drive it into a barren and desolate land, its front into the eastern sea, and its back into the western sea; and its stench will come up, and its bad smell will rise." Surely he has done great things.

Verse 20

I will remove far off from you the northern army - "That is, the locusts; which might enter Judea by the north, as Circassia and Mingrelia abound with them. Or the locusts may be thus called, because they spread terror like the Assyrian armies, which entered Judea by the north. See Zep 2:13." - Newcome. Syria, which was northward of Judea, was infested with them; and it must have been a northern wind that brought them into Judea, in the time of Joel; as God promises to change this wind, and carry them into a barren and desolate land, Arabia Deserta. "And his face toward the east sea," i.e., the Dead Sea, which lay eastward of Jerusalem. "His hinder part toward the utmost sea," the western sea, i.e., the Mediterranean.

And his stink shalt come up - After having been drowned by millions in the Mediterranean, the reflux of the tide has often brought them back, and thrown there in heaps upon the shore, where they putrefied in such a manner as to infect the air and produce pestilence, by which both men and cattle have died in great multitudes. See Bochart, Hieroz., vol. ii., p. 481.

Livy, and St. Augustine after him, relate that there was such an immense crowd of locusts in Africa that, having eaten up every green thing, a wind arose that carried them into the sea, where they perished; but being cast upon the shore, they putrefied, and bred such a pestilence, that eighty thousand men died of it in the kingdom of Massinissa, and thirty thousand in the garrison of Utica, in which only ten remained alive. See Calmet and Livy, lib. xc., and August. De Civitate Dei, lib. iv., c. 31. We have many testimonies of a similar kind.

Because he hath done great things - Or, כִּי ki, although he have done great things, or, after he has done them, i.e., in almost destroying the whole country.

JOEL 2: 21 Land, don't be afraid. Be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things.

Verse 21

Fear not - for the Lord will do great things - The words are repeated from the preceding verse; Jehovah will do great things in driving them away, and supernaturally restoring the land to fertility.

JOEL 2: 22 Don't be afraid, you animals of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness spring up, for the tree bears its fruit. The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.

JOEL 2: 23 "Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD, your God; for he gives you the former rain in just measure, and he causes the rain to come down for you, the former rain and the latter rain, as before.

Verse 23

The former rain moderately - המורה לצדקה hammoreh litsedakah, "the former rain in righteousness," that is, in due time and in just proportion. This rain fell after autumn, the other in spring. See Hos 6:3.

In the first month - בראשון barishon, "as aforetime." So Bp. Newcome. In the month Nisan. - Syriac.

JOEL 2: 24 The threshing floors will be full of wheat, and the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

JOEL 2: 25 I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the great locust, the grasshopper, and the caterpillar, my great army, which I sent among you.

Verse 25

I will restore - the years - It has already been remarked that the locusts not only destroyed the produce of that year, but so completely ate up all buds, and barked the trees, that they did not recover for some years. Here God promises that he would either prevent or remedy that evil; for he would restore the years that the locusts, cankerworm, caterpillar, and palmerworm had eaten.

JOEL 2: 26 You will have plenty to eat, and be satisfied, and will praise the name of the LORD, your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and my people will never again be disappointed.

Verse 26

Praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you - In so destroying this formidable enemy; and so miraculously restoring the land to fertility, after so great a devastation.

JOEL 2: 27 You will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD, your God, and there is no one else; and my people will never again be disappointed.

JOEL 2: 28 "It will happen afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.

Verse 28

Shall come to pass afterward - אַחֲרַי כֵּן acharey ken, "after this;" the same, says Kimchi, as in the latter days, which always refers to the days of the Messiah; and thus this prophecy is to be interpreted: and we have the testimony of St. Peter, Act 2:17, that this prophecy relates to that mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit which took place after the day of pentecost. Nor is there any evidence that such an effusion took place, nor such effects were produced, from the days of this prophet till the day of pentecost. And the Spirit was poured out then upon all flesh, that is, on people of different countries, speaking the languages of almost all the people of the earth; which intimated that these were the first-fruits of the conversion of all the nations of the world. For there was scarcely a tongue in the universe that was not to be found among the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Jews, Cappadocians, people of Pontus, of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, who were residents at Jerusalem at that time; and on whom this mighty gift was poured out, each hearing and apprehending the truths of the Gospel, in his own language wherein he was born. Thus we have Divine authority for saying, that was the fulfillment of this prophecy by Joel. And the mighty and rapid spread of the Gospel of Christ in the present day, by means of the translation of the Scriptures into almost all the regular languages of the world, and the sending missionaries to all nations, who preach the Gospel in those tongues, are farther proofs that the great promise is in the fullest progress to be speedily fulfilled, even in the utmost sense of the words.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy - Shall preach - exhort, pray, and instruct, so as to benefit the Church.

Your old men shall dream dreams - Have my will represented to them in this way, as the others by direct inspiration.

Your young men shall see visions - Have true representations of Divine things made upon their imaginations by the power of God; that they shall have as full an evidence of them as they could have of any thing that came to the mind through the medium of the senses.

JOEL 2: 29 And also on the servants and on the handmaids in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

Verse 29

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids - The gifts of teaching and instructing men shall not be restricted to any one class or order of people. He shall call and qualify the men of his own choice; and shall take such out of all ranks, orders, degrees, and offices in society. And he will pour out his Spirit upon them; and they shall be endowed with all the gifts and graces necessary to convert sinners, and build up the Church of Christ on its most holy faith.

And this God has done, and is still doing. He left the line of Aaron, and took his apostles indiscriminately from any tribe. He passed by the regular order of the priesthood, and the public schools of the most celebrated doctors, and took his evangelists from among fishermen, tent-makers, and even the Roman tax-gatherers. And he, lastly, passed by the Jewish tribes, and took the Gentile converts, and made them preachers of righteousness to the inhabitants of the whole earth. The same practice he continues to the present day; yet he did not then pass by a man brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, no more than he would now a man brought up in a celebrated seminary of

learning. He is ever free to use his own gifts, in his own way; and when learning is sanctified, by being devoted to the service of God, and the possessor is humble and pious, and has those natural gifts necessary for a public teacher, perhaps we might safely say, God would in many cases prefer such: but he will have others, as intimated in the prophecy, that we may see the conversion of men is not by human might, nor power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. The learned man can do nothing without his Spirit; the unlearned must have his gifts and graces, without which both their labors would be unprofitable; and thus the excellency of the power is of God, and no flesh can glory in his presence. See my sermon on this passage.

JOEL 2: 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.

Verse 30

Wonders in the heavens and in the earth - This refers to those dreadful sights, dreadful portents, and destructive commotion, by which the Jewish polity was finally overthrown, and the Christian religion established in the Roman empire. See how our Lord applies this prophecy, Mat 24:29 (note), and the parallel texts.

JOEL 2: 31 The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

Verse 31

The sun shall be turned into darkness - The Jewish polity, civil and ecclesiastical, shall be entirely destroyed.

Before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come - In the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and burning of the temple, by the Romans, under Titus, the son of Vespasian. This was, perhaps, the greatest and most terrible day of God's vengeance ever shown to the world, or that ever will be shown, till the great day of the general judgment. For a full view of this subject, I wish to refer the reader to the notes on Matthew 24.

JOEL 2: 32 It will happen that whoever will call on the LORD's name shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the remnant, those whom the LORD calls.

Verse 32

Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord - יהוה אשר יקרא בשם יהוה col asher yikra beshem Jehovah, "All who shall invoke in the name of Jehovah." That Christ is the Jehovah here mentioned appears plain from Rom 10:15, where the reader had better consult the notes. "This refers," says Bp. Newcome, "to the safety of the Christians during the Jewish and the Roman war." It may: but it has a much more extensive meaning, as the use of it by St. Paul, as above, evidently shows. Every man

who invokes Jehovah for mercy and salvation by or in the name, Jesus - that very name given under heaven among men for this purpose - shall be saved. Nor is there salvation in any other; and those who reject him had better lay these things to heart before it be too late.

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem - Our blessed Lord first began to preach the Gospel in Mount Zion, in the temple, and throughout Jerusalem. There he formed his Church, and thence he sent his apostles and evangelists to every part of the globe: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Of the Jews there was but a remnant, a very small number, that received the doctrine of the Gospel, here termed the remnant that the Lord should call; אִרְכָּא kore, whom he calleth. Many were called who would not obey: but those who obeyed the call were saved; and still he delivers those who call upon him; and he is still calling on men to come to him that they may be saved.