

## Book of Joel

### Chapter 2:1-17

<sup>1</sup>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; indeed, it is **near**,

**Precept Austin** > Before you read these notes on Joel 2 you must realize that this chapter is difficult to interpret and there is a range of opinions on what Joel's vivid descriptions represent, especially the descriptions in verses 2-10 ... In short, the descriptions of the army of locusts can be applied as a foreshadowing of a future army of invading peoples.

**Constable** > I think it probably refers to an attack by some enemy in Joel's day in view of what follows.

**Utley** > There is disagreement among scholars on how to relate the locust plague of chapter 1 with the invading army of chapter 2. For me, they are parallel. Joel is using locusts as a military metaphor of YHWH's invading army (literal, as foreign invaders, or figurative, as locusts).



**Trumpet** > (Strong's) *shophar* >

**Sound an alarm** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to mar (especially by breaking); figuratively, to split the ears (with sound), i.e. Shout (for alarm or joy) -- blow an alarm, cry (alarm, aloud, out), destroy, make a joyful noise, smart, shout (for joy), sound an alarm, triumph.

**Tremble** > (Strong's) to quiver (with any violent emotion, especially anger or fear)

**Day of the LORD** > (Bible Study Tools) As depicted by Joel, the day of the Lord means decision: "*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision*" (3:14). A verdict will be rendered. God will adjudicate peoples.

- His decision for some nations, such as Tyre, Sidon, Moab, Philistia, and Assyria, will be punishment (Joel 3:4-13; cf. Zeph 2:6-15). Divine judgment will be executed.
- On that day a decision will be rendered against everything proud (Isa 2:12-18). God acts with dispatch as he judges nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2 Joel 3:12-13).
- The decision for others will have a saving dimension, for God's promise of blessing will be activated and realized (Joel 3:18-21).

**Near** > (Strong's) near (in place, kindred or time) -- allied, approach, at hand,

<sup>2</sup> *A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.*

**A day of darkness and gloom ...** > (Barnes) The locusts are but the faint shadow of the coming evils, yet as the first harbingers of God's successive judgments.

He tells the following story > "About 8 o'clock there arose above us a thick cloud, which darkened the air, depriving us of the rays of the sun. Everyone was astonished at so sudden a change in the air, which is so seldom clouded at this season; but we soon saw that it was owing to a cloud of locusts. It was about 120 – 180 feet from the ground and covered several leagues of the country, when it discharged a shower of locusts, who fed there while they rested, and then resumed their flight."

We need to look at two passages ... both of which we have seen before in our studies of the Minor Prophets:

- **Amos 5:18-20** > <sup>18</sup>Woe to you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; <sup>19</sup> As when a man flees from a lion and a bear confronts him, or he goes home, leans with his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. <sup>20</sup> Will the day of the LORD not be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?
- **Zephaniah 1:14-15** > <sup>14</sup>The great day of the LORD is near, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. <sup>15</sup> That day is a day of anger, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

**As dawn is spread over the mountains** > (Utley) Many who have experienced the locust plagues of Palestine relate that the redness of the underside of the of the insect's wings looks like the morning sun

**There has never been anything like it, ...** > **Precept Austin** asks us to look at two passages:

- **Daniel 12:1** > "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

➤ **Matthew 24:21** > *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again.*

The **Septuagint** translates this verse as > *for a day of darkness and gloominess is near, a day of cloud and mist: a numerous and strong people shall be spread upon the mountains as the morning; there has not been from the beginning one like it, and after it there shall not be again even to the years of many generations.*

(Remember Wiersbe's divisions for the Book of Joel? > "Immediate, Imminent, and Ultimate"? Verses 2-10 will use the locust swarm from chapter 1 as a vivid illustration of the imminent invasion of an enemy and the ultimate Day of the Lord.)

<sup>3</sup> **A fire consumes before them, and behind them a flame devours. The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, but a desolate wilderness behind them, and nothing at all escapes them.**

**A fire consumes before them, and behind them a flame devours.** > (Barnes) "They scorch many things with their touch." : "Whatever of herb or leaf they gnaw, is, as it were, scorched by fire." : "Wherever they come, the ground seems burned, as it were with fire." : "I have myself observed that the places where they had browsed were as scorched, as if the fire had passed there."

**The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, but a desolate wilderness behind them,**

The **Septuagint** translates this as > *the land before them is as a paradise of delight, and behind them a desolate plain:*

**Nothing at all escapes them** > (Adanson) "After devouring the herbage, 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."

<sup>4</sup> **Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run.**

**Their appearance is like the appearance of horses** > (Chisholm) The Italian word for locust is *cavalette* (little horse), and the Germans use the word *heapforde* (hay horse) in referring to them

**Utley** > The head of the locust resembles the head of a horse. (See also **Rev. 9:7** > *The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like human faces.*)

<sup>5</sup> *With a noise as of chariots they leap about on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people drawn up for battle.*

***With a noise as of chariots ...*** > (Barnes) When I was in the midst of them, it was as loud as the dashing of the waters occasioned by the mill-wheel." : "While passing over our heads, their sound was as of a great cataract." : "We heard a noise as of the rushing of a great wind at a distance." : "In flying they make a rushing rustling noise, as when a strong wind blows through trees."

***Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble*** > (Precept Austin) The consumption of vegetation by locusts is proverbial. The devastation of the armies of the world will be similar in the last days. Their feeding pierced the air like the crackling of a burning bush or dried stubble

<sup>6</sup> *Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale.*

***Anguish***> (Precept Austin) means to writhe, whirl, shake, dance, fear, grieve. (The Hebrew word) has many different meanings, most of which derive from either the idea to whirl in circular movements and to writhe in labor pains ... As discussed above, it is interesting that (the Hebrew word) is used in Isaiah 13:8 describing the reaction of people in the Day of the LORD.

***Pale*** > (Strong's) properly, illuminated, i.e. A glow; as noun, a flush (of anxiety)

<sup>7</sup> *They run like warriors, they climb the wall like soldiers; and each of them marches in line, nor do they lose their way.*



<sup>8</sup> *They do not crowd each other, every warrior of them marches in his path; when they burst through the defenses, they do not break ranks.<sup>9</sup> They storm the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief.*

***When they burst through the defenses ...*** > (Barnes) "We dug trenches, and kindled fires, and beat and burned to death heaps upon heaps, but the effort was utterly useless. wave after wave rolled up the mountain side, and poured over rocks, walls, ditches and hedges, those behind covering up and bridging over the masses already killed."

***They enter through the windows like a thief*** > (Barnes) Modern travelers relate the same. : "They entered the inmost recesses of the houses, were found in every corner, stuck to our clothes and infested our food." : "They overwhelm the province of Nedjd sometimes to such a degree, that having destroyed the harvest, they penetrate by thousands into the private dwellings, and devour whatsoever they can find, even the leather of the water-vessels."

<sup>10</sup> ***Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon become dark, and the stars lose their brightness.***

***Before them the earth quakes*** > (Utley) With thousands insects covering the ground, the earth seemed to move.

***The heavens tremble, the sun and the moon become dark ...*** > (Utley) This may refer to the swarms of insects that cover the sky night and day (cf. Isa. 13:10, 13; Ezek. 32:7, 8).

**Hubbard** > Here the picture of the locust-plague merges with the description of the Day of the Lord (cf. Joel 1:5; 2:1–2). The quaking earth (cf. Amos 1:1; 2:13; 8:8; 9:1) and trembling heavens, the darkened sun and moon and lightless stars (cf. 3:15), are evidence that the Lord himself is coming with his locust army to execute judgment.

**Levy** > Even though Joel is using figurative hyperboles to express the horrible terror of this locust plague, there is a prophetic parallel that will take place in the Tribulation. During the Tribulation there will be three great earthquake which will affect the heavens

<sup>11</sup> ***The LORD utters His voice before His army; His camp is indeed very great, for mighty is one who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?***

***The LORD utters His voice*** > (Precept Austin) Literally "the LORD gives His voice."

***Before His army*** > (Precept Austin) This begs the question "Who composes His army - locusts or others?" In one sense the swarm of locusts is His army for God is using them to punish the sin of Judah. But what is the immediate context? In this passage this is His army in the Day of the LORD. (*continued on the next page*)

Therefore, the locust army is only a shadow of the armies that will attack Israel and Judah. If we remember that this prophecy was probably written about 835 BC, before both the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, then one could interpret the "near" fulfillment in terms of these two invasions (Assyrians into Northern Kingdom in 721 BC and Babylonians into the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC). But in the context of Joel's other descriptions of the Day of the LORD in Joel 3, there is little question that he is alluding to the last days invasion of Gentile armies who have one objective - the annihilation of Israel.

(The paragraph above falls in line with Wiersbe's "Immediate" [the locusts], "Imminent" [the invading armies], and "Ultimate" [The Day of the Lord] divisions of the book.)

**Phillips** > We know from many Old and New Testament prophets that the Antichrist will take over the world in the day of the Lord. A number of wars will be fought during the antichrist's rise to power, and Israel will have a significant role in his strategy. Once the Jewish nation and people have served his purpose, however, the antichrist will turn against them and the blood bath of the great tribulation will threaten to exterminate the Hebrew people completely. This terrible persecution will purge Israel of radical unbelievers and the stage will be set for the battle of Armageddon. By that time the land of Israel will have been ravaged by foreign troops and thousands of her people will be dying daily. When Israel is in her last extremity, the Lord Jesus will return to rescue the beleaguered Hebrew people from the final conflict at Megiddo. Joel was the first prophet to catch a glimpse of this great climax, which he described in Joel 2:11:

<sup>12</sup> ***Yet even now,*** declares the LORD, ***Return*** to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning; <sup>13</sup> ***And tear your heart and not merely your garments.*** Now ***return*** to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and ***compassionate,*** slow to anger, abounding in mercy and relenting of ***catastrophe.***

**Yet even now** > (Precept Austin) What a mercy filled word from the LORD! The time is late for the Day of the LORD is coming and is near but even now there is hope if Israel turns to Yahweh.

**Feinburg** > What grace God offers them! Even at that late hour it was possible to repent and turn to the Lord, thus averting further disaster. God calls for a time of deep exercise of heart and spirit, a time of fasting, a time of brokenness of heart before Him.

**Return** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to turn back

**And tear your heart and not merely your garments** > (Barnes) A truly penitent heart is called a "broken and a contrite heart."

**Precept Austin** > We see an excellent illustration of what God was calling for in the life of King Josiah when he heard the Word of God read from the Book of God:

- **II Kings 22:19** > <sup>19</sup> *since your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become an object of horror and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I have indeed heard you,' declares the LORD.*"
- **II Chronicles 34:27** > <sup>27</sup> *"Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes, and wept before Me, I have indeed heard you," declares the LORD.*

**Compassionate** > (Precept Austin) (The Hebrew word is derived from (a word meaning) *womb* suggesting a connection between the place of the developing child and the strong feelings of love a mother has toward her child. (The Hebrew word) speaks a deep love of one for another rooted in some "natural" bond.

**Catastrophe** > (Strong's) evil, misery, distress, injury

<sup>14</sup> **Who knows, He might turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him, resulting in a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God.**

**Who knows** > (Hubbard) *Who knows* is a humble way of holding out hope. This is no time for presumption, but it is a time for anticipation, held in check by awe of God's sovereignty ... a similar idea, though expressed by another Hebrew construction, is found in **2 Kgs 19:4**; Amos 5:15).

**II Kings 19:4** > <sup>4</sup> *Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to taunt the living God, and will avenge the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'*"

**II Samuel 12:22** > <sup>22</sup> *And he said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, and the child may live.'*

**Resulting in a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God.** > If you had no future, if famine was immediately in front of you, if you had absolutely no hope ... and the Lord sent you the money, or food, or a future ... would your first thought be *a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?*

<sup>15</sup> **Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,**

**Blow a trumpet** > (Constable) The prophet urged the blowing of the shophar in Zion again, but this time to call a public assembly and a fast rather than to announce the coming invader



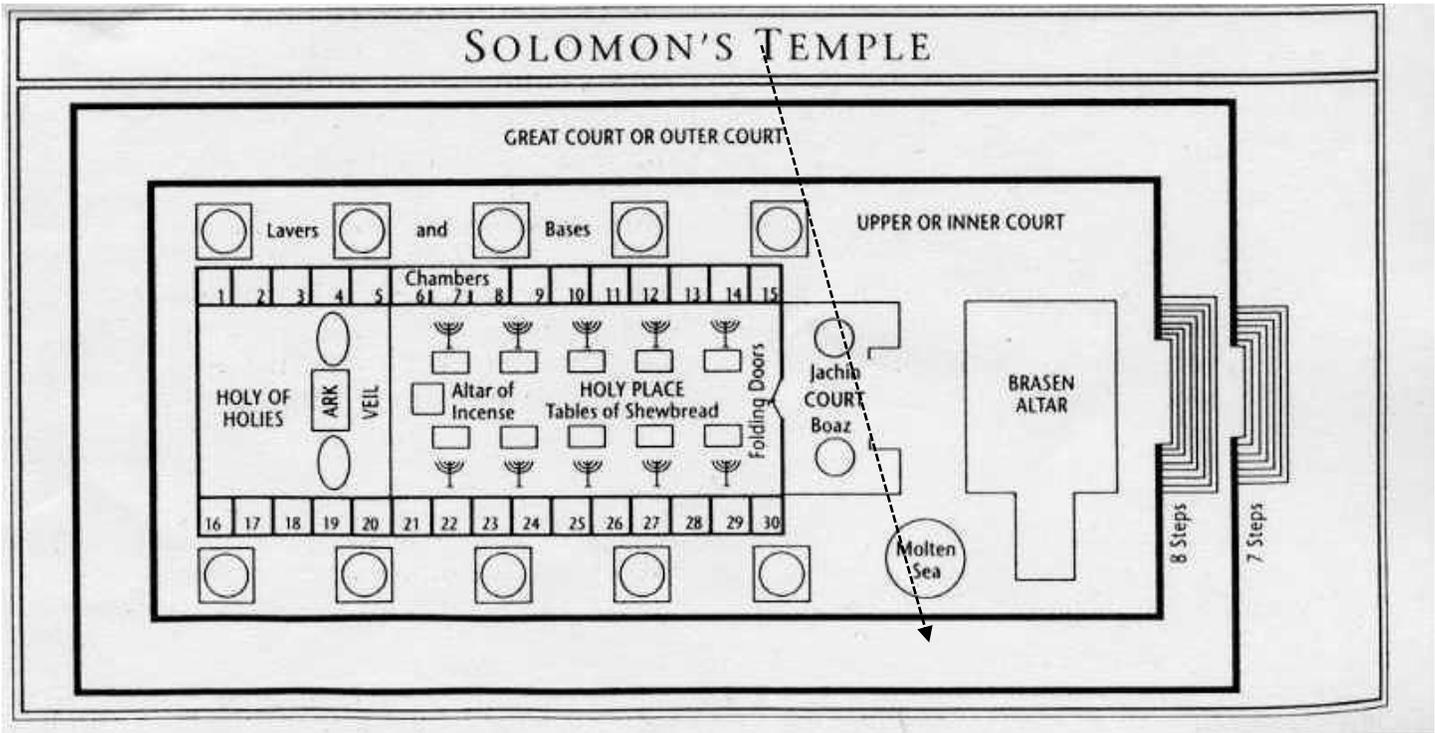
**Blow ... Consecrate ... Proclaim** > (Precept Austin) (In the Hebrew) These are commands, not suggestions. They are a clear call for an urgent response!

- **Jeremiah 18:8** > <sup>8</sup> *if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I planned to bring on it.*
- **Amos 5:4** > <sup>4</sup> *For this is what the LORD says to the house of Israel: "Seek Me so that you may live.*
- **Jonah 3:10** > <sup>10</sup> *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil way, then God relented of the disaster which He had declared He would <sup>[a]</sup>bring on them. So He did not do it.*
- **II Chronicles 7:14** > <sup>14</sup> *and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

<sup>16</sup> **Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Have the groom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber.**

**Have the groom come out of his room ...** > (Barnes) Let the bridegroom go forth - He says not even, the married, or the newly married, he who had taken a new wife, but he uses the special terms of the marriage-day, "bridegroom" and "bride." The new-married man was, during a year, exempted from going out to war, or from any duties which might "press upon him" (Deuteronomy 24:5). But nothing was to free from this common affliction of sorrow. Even the just newly married, although it was the very day of the bridal, were to leave the marriage-chamber and join in the common austerity of repentance.

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, the LORD's ministers, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare Your people, LORD, and do not make Your inheritance a disgrace, with the nations jeering at them. Why should those among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"



**Precept Austin** > The religious leaders were to lead out in this time of national contrition and mourning. Is there a lesson for us in America? What would occur in American churches if pastors called and led their flocks to a time of humbling, of brokenness, of mourning over sins and repenting of sins? *Who knows* if God might send a revival to America!

***"Spare Your people, LORD, and do not make Your inheritance a disgrace, with the nations jeering at them. Why should those among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"*** >

(Wiersbe) The prophet even gave them a prayer to use that presents two reasons why God should deliver them:

- (1) Israel's covenant privileges as God's heritage
- (2) The glory of God's name before the other nations.