

JOEL

Chapter 2:1-27

Introduction

“**Blow the trumpet,**” said Joel, and he said it twice, once in verse one and again in verse fifteen. It’s a command that had special significance to the Jews.

Back in the days of their wilderness wanderings God commanded Moses to “make two silver trumpets...” According to Numbers 10:2 the trumpets were needed “for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.” The trumpets were blown to put the people on *alert*, and then to *advise* them of the direction they should take.

Joel drew upon this well-known Jewish imagery to alert and advise the Jews about the Day of the Lord. They needed first to be **alerted** to the future Day of the Lord, then **advised** what they should do.

As you will see, these verses are intensely Jewish. They are about the nation of Israel and God’s future dealings with them in the Great Tribulation period and beyond. They mostly describe events *after* the Church is removed from the earth in the Rapture. Still, we can make application of these verses to our own lives. **The Day of the Lord Joel introduced into prophetic literature is at hand!** We can and should *alert* and *advise* people about it.

We’ll organize our comments around two points: #1 You “Blow The Trumpet” Of Prophecy To Alert People To The Coming Danger, and #2 You “Blow The Trumpet” Of Prophecy To Advise People About The Coming Deliverer.

#1 You “Blow The Trumpet” Of Prophecy
To Alert People To The Coming Danger
(v1-14)

Joel was the prophet who introduced the theme of the Day of the Lord. The Bible uses that phrase to describe and discuss the whole

period of time beginning immediately after the Rapture of the Church, through the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Jesus, His one-thousand year millennial kingdom on earth, and up to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

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 is coming, for it is at hand:
Joel 2:2 A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people *come*, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any *such* after them, even for many successive generations.

You remember from chapter one that there was a plague of locusts upon the land. Joel began with the current plague of locusts, but he quickly looked forward to both their *immediate* future and their *ultimate* future. When he said the Day of the Lord is “at hand,” he was using the locust plague as an illustration of an invasion by the Assyrian army in their immediate future. When he said the Day of the Lord “is coming,” he was looking much further down the corridors of history and using the Assyrian invasion as an illustration of a future invasion of their land in the very Last Days of human history.

Joel 2:3 A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land *is* like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them.
Joel 2:4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run.

After the locusts were done it looked as though a fire had swept through. The locust plague destroyed everything. The land was like “the Garden of Eden” in its beauty and productivity before the plague, but afterwards it was “a desolate wilderness.”

He compared the locusts to “horses.” I’m told that the German word for locust means *hay horse*, and that in Italian locust means *little horse*. Joel’s comparing the locusts to horses is a brilliant use of imagery. These little horses were a forerunner of the real horses that were coming with the Assyrian invasion. Unless Joel had some other attack we know nothing about, he was probably referring to the Assyrian invasion during the reign of King Hezekiah which took place in 701 BC. You read about it in Second Kings chapters eighteen and nineteen. This was the invasion in which God sent an angel into the Assyrian camp to slay 185,000 Assyrians as they slept, turning them away from Jerusalem, in response to the genuine repentance of the Jews.

But there is something more to be gleaned from his numbers and imagery. You remember from chapter one that Joel described four successive waves of invasion by the locusts – four successive ridings forth of the little horses. Does the imagery of four horses riding forth in successive waves remind you of anything? *Sure it does!* In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, right after the Church is Raptured to heaven, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse ride forth. Joel purposely used these numbers and this imagery to transport your thinking forward to the Last Days. The locust plague of his day was an illustration of the future Great Tribulation.

While we are on the subject of prophetic numbers and images, there is something interesting about trumpets. Back in numbers chapter ten, when Moses is first instructed to make two silver trumpets, God goes on to describe seven uses of those trumpets. If you are familiar with the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ you know that seven trumpets are blown during the Tribulation period. The blowing of trumpets, and especially seven times, indicates that God is dealing with the nation of Israel in the Day of the Lord. The Church – you and I – are **not** on the earth during the Day of the Lord. We will have been resurrected and Raptured prior to its beginning.

Joel has now transported you to the ultimate future. The next verses are a description of some of the events of the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:6 Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color.

Joel 2:7 They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks.

Joel 2:8 They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down.

Joel 2:9 They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief.

Joel 2:10 The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness.

This describes an invasion of the land of Israel in the Day of the Lord. Scholars are not sure exactly which invasion is being described:

1. These verses could refer to the invasion of Israel prophesied in Ezekiel chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine. There you read about Russia and a coalition of Muslim nations coming down to attack Israel at a time when the Jews are experiencing peace and safety.

2. These verses could also describe the invasion prophesied in the ninth chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. An army of demons is let out of the bottomless pit. They are described as looking like locusts. Their attack will be so fierce that men will desire to die but be unable to even kill themselves!

We need to be careful being dogmatic about things that are not perfectly clear. These verses probably refer to all of these invasions and more besides. What **is** perfectly clear is that this is a description of God's dealings with the nation of Israel in the Day of the Lord.

Joel 2:11 The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong *is the One* who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; who can endure it?

This Day of the Lord army, whichever one it is, is sent by the Lord.

1. The Russian invasion of Israel is described as God putting hooks into the jaws of the invaders and drawing them down to His land.
2. The invasion of Revelation chapter nine is by permission of God as the angel of the bottomless pit unleashes the demon army.

The "voice" of God will be heard through these invasions as the armies execute His "word" of judgment upon sinners.

"Who can endure it?" Only those who are saved and sealed by the power of God!

Joel brought them into the future Day of the Lord and then demanded a response:

Joel 2:12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

Joel 2:13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Joel 2:14 Who knows *if* He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him – a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?"

Whether it is the current plague of locusts, or the coming Assyrian invasion, or invasions in the future Day of the Lord – **Repent** and *turn* or *return* to the Lord. He is reaching out to save you.

“Blow the trumpet” and alert people to the coming danger. Joel was talking *to* and *about* Jews; but we know what’s coming and can “blow the trumpet” of Bible prophecy. Soon, very soon – imminently – the Church will be removed from this earth. It’s called the Rapture. After the Rapture, God will turn His attention to the nation of Israel. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse will be let out, and the seven trumpets blown. The Day of the Lord will begin with the darkness of the seven year Tribulation period.

The Day of the Lord is coming and it is at hand. People need to know its terror. It needs to be presented in a way that elicits the response, “Who can endure it?” The answer we can still give them today is that you don’t need to **endure** it because you can **escape** it by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

If you choose to ignore the warning, the question is this: If you can’t live for God now, how do you expect to die for Him then?

The first trumpet was to alert the people to their danger. Then,

#2 You “Blow The Trumpet” Of Prophecy To Advise People Of The Coming Deliverer (v15-27)

The people were alerted to repent – to turn or return to the Lord. Now they were advised how to do it:

Joel 2:15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly;

Joel 2:16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.

Joel 2:17 Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, “Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where *is* their God?’”

This is how the Jews, within their system of ceremonies and sacrifices, were to prove that their repentance was genuine.

Applying this to ourselves, it is a reminder that *everyone*, in *every* situation and status in life, needs to meet the Lord. Most of those people are not here, or at any church service, this morning. They are at home in the houses next to us; they are at work as our fellow

employees; they are our classmates at school. We should look upon everyone we encounter as some precious soul who needs to be alerted to the coming danger and then advised what to do about it.

In verses eighteen through twenty-seven the focus is on the Deliverer. The focus is upon God and Jesus Christ. It looks forward to the time when God will say, in verse twenty-seven, "I am in the midst of Israel."

Joel 2:18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.

Joel 2:19 The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

Joel 2:20 "But I will remove far from you the northern *army*, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things."

The Jews of Joel's day would receive this as a word of encouragement. So will the Jews in the Day of the Lord. God would restore them after the plague of locusts; He would repel the Assyrian invasion; He will destroy the northern armies of Ezekiel thirty-eight and thirty-nine in the Last Days; He will limit the destruction of the demon invasion of the Great Tribulation.

The remaining verses of our text look past the Great Tribulation to the Second Coming of Jesus to rule the earth for one thousand years:

Joel 2:21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvelous things!

Joel 2:22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; for the open pastures are springing up, and 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 has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you - the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

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

Joel 2:25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

Joel 2:26 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 be put to shame.

Joel 2:27 Then you shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel: I *am* the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

A time of future and final restoration is described, when Israel "will **never** be put to shame." It is the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth. "Millennial" is from the Latin word for *one-thousand*. Jesus will return to earth at the end of the seven year Tribulation and He will

rule the earth for one thousand years. This is all part of the period Joel introduces to you as the Day of the Lord.

It is the time in which God will be dealing with the nation of Israel and fulfilling His promises to them as His special, precious, chosen nation. You **must** distinguish between Israel and the Church. Jesus came and revealed Himself as the Jewish Messiah, the Savior of the world. He was officially rejected by the leaders of Israel. Thus God began calling another people, the Church. The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost and it will continue until the Rapture. **After** we are taken to heaven, **then** God will deal with Israel through the Great Tribulation.

How interesting that, as the Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter quoted the last verses of Joel chapter two:

Joel 2:28 “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

Joel 2:29 And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

Joel 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass *that* whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.”

These five verses form a separate chapter in the Hebrew Bible. They are chapter three, and what we label chapter three is chapter four.

I want to look at them separately, in some depth – that’s how important they are. We will do so next week – Lord willing!

Conclusion

Where does that leave us for today? With the encouragement to “blow the trumpet” of Bible prophecy and alert and advise all we encounter.