

JOEL: Where's the Judge?

The word of our God stands for ever ISAIAH 40:8

The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? JOEL 2:11

And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of THEIR wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" REV.6:15-17

Study7A: The Reason for the Judgment

1. A lesson not learned by Israel (and JW's) -- ritual religion vs. spiritual religion (Joel 2:12-17)

The enmity of the heathen against the Jews was an enmity against God. God had avouched them as His people and His property. Their land was an heritage from God. God, in that He had separated them from the heathen, and revealed Himself to them, had made them His especial heritage. Moses [Exod.32:12; Num. 14:13-16; Deut.9:28,29], then Joshua [Josh.7:9], the Psalmists [Ps.74,79,115], plead with God that His own power or will to save His people would be called in question if He should destroy them, or give them up. God, on the other



JOHN WESLEY
was among the great teachers who habitually, almost automatically, spiritualized passages such as these predictions from Joel. For instance, in his commentary on Joel 2:32 Wesley defined the crucial references this way: 'In Mount Zion. In the true church, typified by Zion. Jerusalem. In mystical Jerusalem, the church and the city of the Messiah.'

hand, tells them that not for any deserts of theirs, but for His own Name's sake, He delivered them, lest the heathen should be the more confirmed in their errors as to Himself [Ezek.20:5; 36:21-23]. It is part of true penitence to plead to God to pardon us, not for anything in ourselves (for we have nothing of our own but our sins) but because we are the work of His hands, created in His image, the price of the blood of Jesus, called by His Name. E.B. Pusey *Minor Prophets: Joel* p.152

2. Results of Israel's final repentance (3:18-32)

A. *paradise* -- the earth will give its yield (Lev.26:3-5,10)

B. *peace* -- Israel finally has rest from its enemies (Lev.26:6-8)

C. *power from on high* -- God will anoint the nation, not just its leaders (Jer.31:1-34)

Joel foresaw a time when the limits of intermediation in knowing God's will would be removed by gracious divine action, and everyone would experience what Joel himself presumably understood, i.e., the beneficial nature of direct encounter and interaction with a living God. D. Stuart *Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea-Jonah* p.230

D. *permanence* -- Israel finally enters the everlasting covenant (Jer.31:-35-37)

The name of the Lord expresses His True Being, That which He IS ... For the Name rendered *The Lord* expresses that He IS, and that He alone IS, the Self-Same, the Unchangeable ... E.B. Pusey *op.cit.*, p.193 (emph. added)

Study 7b: Unchangeable Name, Unchangeable Purpose

3. The national repentance of Israel is synchronized with what else? (Joel 3:1)

It is certain from S. Paul that there shall be a complete conversion of the Jews, before the end of the world, as indeed has always been believed. This shall probably be shortly before the end of the world ... Pusey *op.cit.*, p.200

4. What sins of the Gentiles precipitate the day of Jehovah? (Joel 3:2-8; Gen.12:3; Zech.2:8)

[on v.13, *their wickedness is great*] ... they aimed at destroying Israel; their fate will be destruction. It has been said that the Jewish people has always stood at the grave of its persecutors. Rabbi S.N. Lehrman *Soncino Bible: Joel* p.77

5. What is the issue that brings the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat? (Joel 3:9-14; Zech.14)

There *all nations from every side* were summoned to come, as they thought to destroy God's people and heritage. Here the real end is assigned for which they were brought together; for God would sit to judge them ... So our Lord says, *When the Son of Man shall come in His Glory, and all the holy Angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His Glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations.* Our Lord, in that He uses words of Joel, seems to intend to direct our minds to the prophet's meaning. What follows are nearly His own words [Matt.13:30,39] ... Pusey *op.cit.* p.231

6. Universal signs, local situation; universal rule, local seat (Joel 3:15-17)

Zion, i.e., Jerusalem, figures prominently in so many restoration oracles because the restoration blessings presume its continued existence in several areas: (1) blessing type 1, renewal of Yahweh's presence, involves Jerusalem implicitly as his dwelling place ...; (2) blessing types 2 and 3, renewal of the covenant and restoration of orthodoxy, both assume the Sinai covenant's designation of Jerusalem as worship center (Deut 12); and (3) blessing types 7 and 8, repossession of the land and reunification, both imply Jerusalem's historic centrality in governmental administration. D. Stuart *op.cit.* p.270

And shall utter His voice from Jerusalem, i.e., either from His Throne aloft *in the air* above the holy city, or from the heavenly Jerusalem, out of the midst of the tens of thousands of His only angels, and saints, who shall come *with Him*. Edward B. Pusey *op.cit.*, p.237

God's covenant name to Israel was Jehovah and He now declared that they should "know that I am Jehovah your God". Their Deliverer in the coming day of judgment will be no other than the One who has been their Protector throughout their history.

Where and why the Valley of Jehoshaphat?

The only valley called the *valley of Jehoshaphat*, is the valley of Kedron lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, encircling the city on the east. There Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah cast the idols which they had burned. The valley was the common burying-place for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. *There* was the garden whither Jesus oftentimes resorted with His disciples; *there* was His Agony and Bloody Sweat; there Judas betrayed Him; thence He was dragged by the rude officers of the High Priest. The Temple, the token of God's Presence among them, the pledge of His accepting their sacrifices which could only be offered there, overhung it on the one side. There, under the rock on which that temple stood, they dragged Jesus, *as a lamb to the slaughter*. On the other side, it was overhung by the Mount of Olives, whence *He beheld the city and wept over it*, because it knew not *in that its day, the things which belonged to its peace*; whence, after His precious Death and Resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven. There the angels foretold His return, *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*. It has been a current opinion, that our Lord should descend to judgment, not only in like manner, and in the like Form of Man, but in the same place, over this valley of Jehoshaphat. Certainly, if so it be, it were appropriate that He should appear in His Majesty, where, for us, He bore the extremest shame; that He should judge *there*, where for us He submitted to be judged. Edward B. Pusey *The Minor Prophets: Joel* pp.202-203

Frederick A. Tatford *Minor Prophets: Joel* p.69

7. What reversal is here predicted that illuminates THE key JW text? (Joel 3:18-21; Luke 21:24)

Wonderful to say, neither Roman nor Turk has reduced the little country of Judah to a desolation. In our own day the Zionists propose to restore its fertility, build its cities, and bring back its ancient glories. R.F. Horton *Century Bible: Minor Prophets* Vol.1 p.113
As Deut 30:7 promises, what Israel's enemy has done it will not get away with, but will have done to it. Joel's audience could take some comfort in knowing that Israel would, on the Day, be vindicated. Vengeance on Yahweh's enemies (Deut 32:41-42) is not a matter of pettily getting even, but of covenantal justice, as in Amos 1-2 ... Jerusalem, under attack by an unstoppable enemy, HAS BEEN, IS, AND WILL BE not just any city, but Yahweh's dwelling place. Douglas Stuart *op.cit.*, p.271 (emphasis added)