

Commentary on Joel 2, by Chuck Smith 2.28.24

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February memory verse Galatians 6:7 (NKJV) Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

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Includes Historical Overview from The Teachers Commentary

Now he uses chapter one as a springboard and he begins to speak now of a yet future day of devastation that is coming from armies that are to invade the land. And in the second chapter, as he describes this invading army, it is interesting to notice the description that he gives, because it is not much of a stretch of the imagination for us to see that he is describing modern warfare. The things that he described were things that were totally unknown and unheard of in his day, but yet they are things that are common in modern warfare.

Now, if you were Joel the prophet and God gave you a vision of a battle that would be taking place with modern warfare, but all you knew was a battle with the armies with swords and spears and all, how do you think you could describe a modern battle with helicopter, gun ships and with the transporting of troops though planes with paratroopers and so forth? If you had a vision of this kind of a battlefield and tanks and the cannons and so forth, the fire and all, how would you describe it? Probably much like Joel did here in this chapter... I think he did a tremendously commendable job in describing something he had never dreamed of, and yet the Lord gave him an insight into the battle of the future day.

Now, the nation of Israel needed to be established again in order that the prophecies of the last days be fulfilled, because in the prophecies of the last days there is that presupposition in all of the prophecies that Israel does exist as a nation again. In fact, not only existing as a nation, but their worship is to be re-instituted. Now as the nation Israel is to be reborn, according to the prophecy, one of the first of the real obstacles that they are going to face will be their immediate surrounding nations, according to the prophecies Zechariah, when Israel becomes a nation once more. And they did and have faced the opposition from their surrounding neighbors.

But then a greater test is going to come, and this will be when Russia invades the Middle East. And in this invasion God will show His hand strong on behalf of the people and their eyes will be opened unto God like never before. And then there is to be one final conflict, as the antichrist comes into the land with his armies of the federated nations of Western Europe, and at this time the Jews will once more be driven from the land and find refuge in the wilderness, the rock city of Petra, for three and half years, until God's wrath that He is going to pour out is completed.

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It would seem that chapter 2 is describing the Russian invasion inasmuch the Lord refers to his removal far off from you the northern army. And in [Ezekiel 38](#) it is mentioned that this army will be coming from the north. Interesting, in the descriptions of Ezekiel, "as a cloud to cover the land," and Joel also uses the pictures of the clouds and the darkness and so forth that will be created by this invading army.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sound the alarm in my holy mountain: let all of the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD comes, it is near at hand ([Joe 2:1](#));

Now the day of the Lord does encompass a period of time. The great judgment that God is going to bring upon the earth is known as the day of the Lord, the day of His fierce anger. The day that God establishes the new kingdom of righteousness through the reign of Jesus Christ is also known as the day of the Lord. The day that the Lord gathers the nations for judgment is known as the day of the Lord. So it encompasses the period of these last days. So the day of the Lord is near.

A day of darkness and of gloominess ([Joe 2:2](#)),

So this is not the day of the triumphant reign of Christ. That will be following the day of darkness and gloom.

a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not ever been the like, neither shall there be any more after it, even to the years of many generations ([Joe 2:2](#)).

A great army like as never been assembled in the history of man.

Russia today has some eighty thousand tanks ready for battle. Never in the history of man has so much armament been created; over eighty thousand tanks. And as he goes on to describe the invasion, surely tanks are involved.

A fire devours before them; behind them a flame burns: the land is like the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, nothing shall escape them ([Joe 2:3](#)).

Now when the Jews came back to the land one of the marvelous things that they did was take this land that had been like a barren wilderness and they began to develop the land of Israel from an agricultural standpoint. Beautiful farmlands, beautiful orchards, beautiful avocado groves; mile after mile stretching out of beautiful land like the Garden of Eden. And the hillsides which were too rocky to cultivate, they planted with trees and millions upon millions of trees have been planted in the land. So the barren hillsides are now beautiful forests. And with the planting of all of these trees they've been able to effect a change of the weather patterns, and they've been able to increase the rainfall.

The annual rainfall in the land has been increased dramatically because of the extra humidity that has been put in the air through all of the trees that have been planted, the

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forests that have been planted. And their whole project of taking this land that was barren wilderness, planting it and developing it, is really a marvel to everyone who visits. They have developed marvelous new innovations in agriculture as far as irrigation and all: the drip system of irrigation and the sprinkling systems and all. They really have just proved to be fantastic farmers. They've transformed the land and you'll hear the statement quite often, "They have made the land like the Garden of Eden." And it is true.

And here the prophecy said, "The land before them is as the Garden of Eden." You could not have said that fifty years ago. For fifty years ago the land was still... the valley of Megiddo was still a swamp, the Hula Valley was all swamp, Beersheba was all barren desert and wilderness. The Sharon plains were just beginning, actually, at the turn of the century was when they started developing in the Sharon plains. They bought the swampland and then they began to create new ditches and all to drain the swampland and then planted eucalyptus trees because they drink so much water out of the ground. And then they began to plant the orange orchards and all, and now it's a veritable Garden of Eden through their careful planning and wise development of the land.

But the fact that he refers to the land before them like the Garden the Eden, that took the present day. That didn't happen until Israel became a nation and really began then to bring the Jordan water down to the wilderness areas for their irrigation and turning the land into a Garden of Eden.

But behind this invading army is like a desolate wilderness. War is such a horrible thing, the devastation that it brings. The Jews have taken a desolate wilderness and made it a Garden of Eden, but these invaders are coming to take the Garden of Eden and again turn it into a desolate wilderness.

nothing shall escape them ([Joe 2:3](#)).

Now he describes the appearance of this invading army. And listen, this is, to me, quite interesting.

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountain shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people that are set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: and all faces will gather blackness. They will run like mighty men; they will climb the wall like men of war; they shall march every one in his way, and they shall not break rank: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they will not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; and shall run upon the wall, they shall climb upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 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 ([Joe 2:4-10](#)):

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So he describes this awesome invading army that is coming to desolate the land. But, in verse 11 there is another army.

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executes his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can abide it? ([Joe 2:11](#))

And so he speaks of the Lord's army in contrast. Now, the Lord is going to stop the Russians. In Ezekiel chapter 38 God declares that when Russia and her allied nations invade Israel that God's fury is going to arise in His face and He is going to turn them back. The Battle of Armageddon, which people are much more familiar with than this battle of Russia when it invades the Middle East, the Battle of Armageddon will pit the forces of the Western world against the forces of the Eastern world; primarily China and Russia pitted against the forces of the Western world in the Battle of Armageddon. But here, as this invading army has come, the Lord speaks of repelling it with His army, His mighty hosts. And, of course, the description of the destruction of the Russian army by the host of the Lord is given to you in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39.

Now because of this great desolation, this great war that the people are going to face,

Therefore, [because of this,] saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me with all your heart ([Joe 2:12](#)),

Now, one sad commentary that must be made against the modern nation of Israel is that the people really haven't turned to the Lord with all their hearts. The people are not really very religious. It is estimated that less than ten percent of the Jews that are in the land are really religious at all. And we have observed this while we were there. Now, they do observe religious observances; that is, the Sabbath day. But so many of the Jews that we have conversed with in Israel claim to be atheists. But though they claim to be atheists, they keep Sabbath and they keep kosher, as far as they will not eat dairy products with meat products, and they're almost insulted when people do. A lot of times, when we were over there, people unknowingly ask for a glass of milk when we've had a dinner with meat. And they are polite, but they let you know you can't have any milk when you've had meat. And they keep this kosher kind of law, yet they really don't know why. Many of them that we've talked to who said they were atheists, we said, "Well, why don't you eat bacon? You know, why don't you eat a ham sandwich? Well you know, or ham and cheese?" Oh, oh, oh man.

So they are as those that were described in the New Testament, they have a form of godliness and yet they deny the power of God. They deny God in their lives. But God is calling for them to turn unto Him with their whole heart, with all of your heart. Problem with many people is that they turn to God in a half-hearted way and this you might say is true in Israel. People have turned to God in a half-hearted way.

Turn to me [God said,] with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning ([Joe 2:12](#)):

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That speaks of a real desperation before God. It is sad that many times God has to bring us into desperate straights before we really seek Him. There have been only a few times in my life when I was really desperate before God, but I will testify to you, each time I was really desperate before God, God met me in a very dramatic way.

God says, Rend your heart, not your garments ([Joe 2:13](#)),

We read many times in the scriptures where problems came and the people would tear their clothes to show how upset they were or how deeply emotional they were touched and so they ripped their clothes. And it was an outward demonstration of a deep emotional feeling. But like all outward demonstrations, people begin to abuse them. You can go through the outward motions but not really feel it within. It becomes sort of thing of a hypocrisy, where I look like I am going through it but it's just a display, just a show. And so it became a commonplace thing. "Oh, you can't go with me tonight? Oh, oh, oh," you know, you rip your clothes and you know... it didn't really show that deep, deep, deep grief, sorrow that the act originally intended to manifest. So God says, "Hey, look, I want to see your hearts ripped, not your clothes. I want to see your heart really torn before God. Rend your hearts, tear your hearts, not your garments." God doesn't want any sham when you come to Him. God wants you to come to Him with your whole heart. He doesn't want to play games with you. He wants you to be honest and sincere. He wants you to rend your heart, not your garments.

turn to the LORD your God ([Joe 2:13](#)):

The second call to turn to God. And, of course, things are desperate; that's the time to turn to God. Of course, anytime's a good time to turn to God, but especially when things are desperate.

turn to God: for God is gracious and God is merciful ([Joe 2:13](#)),

That's why we turn to Him, that we might receive His mercy, that we might receive His grace.

he is of great kindness, he is slow to anger ([Joe 2:13](#)),

And God doesn't like to use judgment to get people's attention.

it repents him of the evil ([Joe 2:13](#)).

That is, of the judgment that it was, that was necessary to get you to wake up, to get you to turn around, to get your attention. God doesn't like to use harsh means. He only does so because He loves you so much that He can't let you just destroy yourself. So when you are headstrong, going your own path of destruction, God will sometimes use very severe means to stop you and to get your attention. Maybe the death or the illness of someone that is very dear and close to you. God is seeking... God doesn't like to use those means, but unfortunately, many times we are so dull in our spiritual sensitiveness

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that God has to use stringent measures before we ever respond. It repents Him though. He doesn't like using these kind of measures.

Turn to God, for who knows just what God will do in helping you, blessing you. Who knows the blessings that God has in store for your life. Who knows what glorious things God has in mind for you?

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly of the people: Gather the people, and sanctify the congregation, assemble together the elders, and gather the children, and those that are nursing: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. And 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 heathens should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? ([Joe 2:15-17](#))

And so it is a time of national revival. Call the people together before God. And this day will come in Israel as they are threatened by this insurmountable foe from a natural standpoint. They'll be forced to cry out unto God. Of course, God calls upon the ministers to pray between the porch and the altar that God would spare His people from the devastation and the destruction of this enemy.

And as a result,

The LORD will be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yes, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and I will drive him into a land that is barren and desolate, and with his face toward the east sea, and the hinder part towards the utmost sea, and his smell shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things ([Joe 2:18-20](#)).

[Be not afraid,] Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree bears her fruit, and the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month ([Joe 2:21-23](#)).

Now the interesting thing is that one thing that has happened in Israel is the return of what they call the former and the latter rains. They begin to get their first rains some time in October, late October, November. And now they are beginning to get good heavy rains in the springtime, and it is causing the land to just produce so abundantly all of the rain that they are now getting. And God promised that He would restore again the former rain and the latter rain. Something that the land did not have for over two thousand years but now again is experiencing each year. Tell me that God's Word isn't

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true. Tell me that God doesn't know what He's talking about. The evidence is the nation of Israel; all of the evidence that anybody would ever need.

The floor shall be full of wheat, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you ([Joe 2:24-25](#)).

God's promise of the restoration of the years that were destroyed when they were away from God. You know, this is what the prophet was saying, "God is gracious. God is merciful." It's tragic what we do with our lives. I think one of the saddest things in the world is wasted potential. I see young people with such tremendous potential; good minds, good personalities, talented, and I see them just wasting their lives doing such foolish things, doing things that for years they will suffer the consequences. And I think of the wasted potential and I think that that's one of the greatest tragedies of our day are the lives, the wasted potential of lives.

And you shall eat 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. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel ([Joe 2:26-27](#)),

Now the Lord tells us in [Ezekiel 38](#) when He destroys the invading Russian army that He will... His name will be sanctified before the nations of the earth and they will know that He is God; they will know that God will fight and does fight for His people Israel.

and that I am the LORD your God, and there is none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, [or in the last days] that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out of my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. And the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the awesome day of the LORD comes. 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 ([Joe 2:27-32](#)).

Now this prophecy of Joel really pertains to these last days. It has often been misunderstood because Peter went on the day of Pentecost and the Spirit was poured out upon the gathered church and there was the accompanying signs of the pillars of fire, the speaking in other languages and a noise like a mighty rushing wind. That when the people assembled and they heard these people speaking these various dialects from the nations from which they came, they marveled and wondered greatly at what was going on, as they heard them glorifying God in their various dialects. And they asked the question, "What does this mean?" And others who were standing around sort of mocked and said, "Man, they've gotten a hold of some new wine someplace. They're really drunk." And so Peter stood up addressing himself to the gathering multitude he

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said, "Men and brethren hearken unto me, listen to me, for these men are not drunken as ye suppose. It's only nine o'clock in the morning, it's too early to be drunk." But you remember what their question was, "What does this mean?" Peter said, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel," and he quotes this prophecy.

Now, because Peter quoted it and declared that what they were seeing was what Joel had spoken about, people have assumed that it was the complete fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. Not so, in fact, Peter didn't even say it was the fulfillment of the prophecy. You see, the fulfillment indicates a complete filling. It wasn't. It was just the beginning of the outpouring of God's Spirit. But the real prophecy of Joel does not pertain to the day of Pentecost, but the real prophecy of Joel pertains to the last days. It pertains to the nation of Israel when God restores to Israel His position of divine favor and blessing, and Israel will once be again the instrument of God to bring light into the world. "And it shall come to pass afterward," after Israel is restored, "none of them are ashamed, that God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And upon My servants and handmaids will I pour out of My Spirit. And I will show wonders." And, of course, the Bible speaks of these wonders that will happen in the Great Tribulation: the wonders in the heaven, the sun darkened, the moon turn to blood. These are referred to by Jesus as a part of the period of the Great Tribulation. And these things will all happen before the great and awesome of the LORD comes. That is, the day of the glorious return of Jesus Christ in power and glory.

And it shall come to pass, that even in that day [during the Great Tribulation] whosoever will call on the name of the LORD [will be saved,] will be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, and in the remnant [God's faithful remnant] whom the LORD will call ([Joe 2:32](#)).

So this is yet to be fulfilled. It is a prophecy that is yet future and its real fulfillment is yet to take place.

Historical Overview from The Teachers Commentary

When Solomon's kingdom was torn in 931 B.C., the Southern Kingdom, Judah, comprised considerably less territory and had a much smaller population than the Northern. In the initial years of conflict between the two kingdoms, however, many from Israel drifted across the border. Committed to the worship of Yahweh, they remained faithful to the Jerusalem temple and to the festivals that God had instituted through Moses. They rejected Bethel and Dan and the counterfeit priesthood ordained for the North by King Jeroboam I.

But as the decades passed, the once-united nation accepted its divided state. And any initial claim of Judah to a special godliness was lost.

Of Judah's 19 kings, Scripture marks out 8 as "good." Generally these kings stimulated revivals. Yet the fact that the Southern Kingdom even needed revival, plus the Bible's

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description of the sins that were put away, tells us that Judah tended to fall into the same apostasy that plagued Israel.

King Asa, who ruled from 911-870 B.C. (2 Chron. 14-15), removed idols from the land as well as the male prostitutes associated with their worship. He also deposed his grandmother as queen mother because she had made an idol to Asherah. Encouraged by the Prophet Azariah, Asa led the people of Judah to renew their covenant promises to God.

Yet Asa himself did not remain committed to God. In his later years, he imprisoned the Prophet Hanani for rebuking him, and he failed to turn to God for aid when he was ill (2 Chron. 16).

Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, also followed the Lord. Like Asa, he attempted to root out the worship of Baal and removed many "high places." These high places (*bamoth*) were elevations set aside for pagan worship. Each contained an altar featuring idols. Sometimes the Hebrews would set aside a high place for the worship of the Lord and would ordain local priests. This practice was in direct violation of Old Testament Law, which called for a single worship center and for a priesthood drawn entirely from descendants of Aaron. The pagan associations of worship were much too strong: worship there would soon take on the characteristics of occultism and immorality.

So Jehoshaphat's attack on the high places was undertaken out of zeal for God, as was his insistence that the Levites resume their ministry of traveling throughout Judah to teach the "Book of the Law" (2 Chron. 17:9).

The next kings of Judah were evil, and set an example gladly followed by the people. Athaliah, a daughter of Jezebel (wife of Israel's King Ahab), actually came to reign in Judah, and she aggressively promoted the cult of Baal.

However, there was a core of godly resistance. After six years, Jehoiada, the high priest, secretly crowned seven-year-old Joash as king. The boy had been hidden from Athaliah for six years, for she had had all other possible claimants to the throne executed. But now military and religious leaders combined to bring about the coup, and Athaliah was executed (cf. 2 Chron. 22:10-23:15).

Joash and the four kings who followed him were relatively good kings. Under Joash (835-796 B.C.) the priests of Baal were killed and the pagan altars and idols destroyed. The temple was repaired, and worship of God was reinstated. But in Joash's later years, he also faltered. After the high priest who had crowned and advised him died, Joash turned aside from the Lord.

Under the later kings, Judah knew both trial and triumph. As in the Northern Kingdom, increasing prosperity led to the neglect of faith. Ahaz, Judah's king from 732-715 B.C., the years preceding the destruction of Samaria, committed himself to evil. He promoted the worship of Baal and even engaged in infant sacrifice (2 Chron. 28:3). He also

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established a pagan altar in the Jerusalem temple as the official place of sacrifice. Finally he closed the temple to force his people into the ways of worship that he wanted. Micah, a contemporary prophet, cried out against Judah in those days:

You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.