

# The Remnant

*“Even so then at this  
present time also there  
is a remnant according to  
the election of grace.”  
Romans 11.5*

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## THIS AND THAT—Acts 2.16

### PART I

*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2.16-21).*

**O**ne day last November I received an interesting telephone call about a remark in the November-December 2006 issue of *The Remnant*. Our courteous and cordial caller and subscriber identified himself as a “partial preterist.” If I correctly understood all he had to say, he felt that my characterization of preterists on page 14-15 of that issue was not entirely fair to his position. In fairness to him I will say, I was describing the “full preterist” view that says ALL THINGS (prophesied) were fulfilled at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, including the second advent (second coming) of Christ, the resurrection, “the end of the world”

(whatever *that* means), the judgment of all mankind (Revelation 20.11-15), the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21.1), the descent of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21.2), and any other prophecy you want to include in the ALL THINGS of Matthew 24.34 (“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till **all** these things be fulfilled”) and Luke 21.32 (“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till **all** be fulfilled.”).

In the previous article I said, “...preterists say (like the Arminians), ‘All means ALL!’” That was not to say preterists *are* Arminians. Some are, and some, like our caller, are not. My point was that the (“full”) preterists insist that the **all** in Matthew 24.34 and Luke 21.32 means ALL prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70, and they say it like the Arminians’ say the **all** in 1 Timothy 2.4 means ALL of mankind.

In our conversation, the caller mentioned he believes the text at the head of this article has been “spiritually” fulfilled, including the references to the sun, moon, blood, fire, and smoke. This, according to his understanding, was at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Of course I disagree, and now nothing will suffice short of my expressing my view about the text. What I express herein is my understanding as I trust the Lord has given to me if I am not deceived. If some disagree with my conclusions, I would hope they will also be inclined to be as charitable as they would expect others to be with them on points of disagreement.

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## Contents

<b>This and That, Part I</b> , by C. C. Morris.....	1
<b>This and That, Part II</b> , by C. C. Morris.....	6
<b>Advertisements</b> (tapes and books).....	18-19
<b>A Statement of Principles</b> .....	20

(Continued from page 1)

My views are not the result of reading after Dr. Gill, Matthew Henry, and other commentaries, but they are the result of reading and searching the Scriptures (with the Lord's guidance, I fervently hope and trust) for over sixty years. The Bible is its own best commentary. In Paul's comment, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2.13)," his "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" has to do with comparing Scripture with Scripture, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1.20)." And, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind (Romans 14.5)."

First, the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 was probably in AD 33, no later than AD 34. This feast day was an annual observance directed by God (see page 7, "One Pentecost Among Many") to be observed perpetually by the nation of Israel.

Those who "spiritualize" Joel's text and Peter's quote of it, as do the preterists and those like them, seem to me to have a major problem with a relatively short period of time of about thirty-seven years: At first glance it seems as if the preterists are saying "this day of Pentecost in AD 33 IS that destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70." How "this" day of Pentecost in AD 33 can be "that" destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman legions thirty-seven years later, requires stretching our understanding beyond the breaking-point because Peter said, *this IS that*.

Yet, as I see the text, Peter's text from Joel covers *at least* from the day of Pentecost through the yet-future *second advent*, or the *second coming*, or the *return of the Lord Jesus Christ* (all of these terms refer to the same event) some 2,000 years later, more or less. There is no problem in understanding Peter's text as a prophecy of the entire "church age." However, to approach this text, by the grace of God with the understanding that only comes from Him, requires that we examine, in the light and leadership of the Holy Spirit, from His written word, what exactly Peter meant by the "**this**," and what did he mean by the "**that**" in "**that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel"?

### THIS AND THAT

1. The word *this* occurs ten times in Acts 2 in the King James Version (KJV), which I use. Not every *this* is referring to **that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel. In verse 40, "Save yourselves from **this** untoward generation" was a *part* of the events of that day, but it was not the chief subject Peter had in mind. Likewise, in verse 32, "**This** Jesus hath God raised up" has a bearing on the things happening in Jerusalem that day, and those events would not have happened without Christ's resurrection, but His resurrection was not in itself the **this** to which Peter referred. What, then, was the **this** that Peter had in mind?

### "THE CHURCH AGE"

More positively, the *this*, which Peter said IS "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," was the *beginning* of the church age *as we have known it* from that day until now. I say *as we have known it* because it is my understanding that God's church has always existed in every age from Adam on, as it hath pleased Him, but not in its present form. (Hassell, in "The History of the Church of God," page 77, to cite no other place, says, "Thus we find the **church** in Egypt, in the year of the world 2294, B. C. 1706....")

The word "church" (Greek, **ἐκκλησία**, *ecclesia*, or some form of this word) is properly rendered in English as "assembly" or "meeting." **The church is the people who are meeting, not the building in which they meet.** A lot of "church trouble" has revolved around brethren's confusing

the people with the real estate where those people meet.

When the Old Testament (originally written in Hebrew) was translated into the Greek language ("about 280 B. C.," Hassell, page 40), the Greek version became known as the *Septuagint* Version. In it, the Hebrew word for *congregation*, and a few similar words meaning a gathering of people, were rendered "*ecclesia*" over one hundred times. Thus we have Stephen referring to "the **church** in the wilderness (Acts 7.38)." Why? Because the *congregation* of Israel was called an *ecclesia* in the *Septuagint*, and the KJV translators (mis)translated it "*church*" instead of "*congregation*."

The people living in the first century after Christ's birth, to whom Stephen spoke and to whom the New Testament writers wrote, were far more familiar with the *Septuagint* Version than they were with the original Hebrew. They had no problem understanding that the speakers and writers meant the collected *assembly* of people, not a building. Likewise, in Acts 19.41, the town-clerk (verse 35) "dismissed the assembly [*ecclesian*]." The *assembly* was in this case an unruly mob (read the entire 19<sup>th</sup> chapter to get the setting).

To be consistent, the KJV translators would have had to translate this verse as, "And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the **church**." Some commentators, thinking of the mob-like atmosphere that prevails in some churches, have suggested that if there ever was a place where *ecclesia* should have been translated "church," it would be in Acts 19.41.

Leaving the above necessary digression, let us look next at the ten uses of the word "this" in Acts 2, all of which have a bearing on **that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

The **this** of which Peter speaks is further defined as:

A. "when **this** was noised abroad (verse 6)": This, which was noised abroad, was the strange and revolutionary fact that the apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak with other tongues, i.e., in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

B. "What meaneth **this**?" (verse 12): This, the apostles speaking in foreign languages, was detected by "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven (verse 5)." There were seventeen nations

identified in verses 9-11, and “every man heard them speak in his own language.” When Peter spoke, those from Egypt heard his words in Egyptian. Those born in Asia heard in their own Asian dialect, and so on. No wonder they were amazed, having taken note that the apostles were Galileans, and it was “perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men (Acts 4.13)” who had no occasion to be multilingual.

Some of the onlookers asked, what does this mean? In reply, others suggested the apostles were full of new wine, babbling because of intoxication.

C. “Be **this** known unto you” (verse 14): Peter addressed the drunkenness charge directly. “Be **THIS** known unto you: these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [about 9:00 a.m., the third hour counting from sunrise].” Peter first sets forth the negative, what this, the apostles’ speaking in foreign languages, was **not**: These are not drunken. Then he sets forth the positive, what **THIS** is:

D. “**This is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel (verse 16)”: The text in Joel is the key that explains all that has happened thus far on that Pentecost morning, and it embraces all that Peter was about to say. This occurrence and all about it, before, during, and after, **IS** what Joel prophesied about.

Before we can go into Joel’s prophecy and Peter’s inspired use of it, we must yet look at the other uses of the word “this” in Acts 2, for all Peter says, all that has happened, and all that will happen, is a part of **THAT** spoken by Joel.

E. “his (David’s) sepulchre is with us unto **this** day (verse 29)”: David had lived and died about 1,000 years before Christ was born. David was a King-Prophet. Peter argues that David was not speaking of himself. Peter believed in the bodily resurrection. David likewise believed in the resurrection of the body. Peter’s argument is that David *could not* have been speaking of himself when he wrote,

“Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also **my flesh shall rest in hope**: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see **corruption**”

because David “is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto **this** day.”

David’s mortal remains were even then in the cemetery in the Kidron Valley, within eyesight of the temple mount where Peter was standing, preaching. David’s bones could be examined if necessary, proof that he was not speaking of his own self when he prophesied of *someone’s flesh* resting in hope and of *that someone’s flesh* not seeing corruption.

F. “He (David) seeing **this** before spake of the resurrection of Christ (verse 31)”: Peter, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit resting upon him, says the text (in Psalm 16.9-11) **IS** nothing less than a prophecy of the resurrection of the body of Christ.

The foresight David experienced, by the way, David’s “seeing this before” (Greek, **προιδων**, *proidon*), is simple foresight, simple foreknowledge that God gave to him as a prophet. It is entirely different from the foreknowledge of God spoken of in verse 23 (Greek, **προγνωσει**, *prognosei*). The foreknowledge of God is linked directly to God’s determinate counsel or predestination. God’s foreknowledge is just as “determinate” as is His counsel. It is determinate counsel and determinate foreknowledge. Not only did God “foresee” it, He ordained when, how, why, where, and by whom His son would be “taken, and by wicked hands [have] crucified and slain.” That is how God foresaw it. He foresees that which He eternally decreed. Put another way, He decreed whatever will come to pass, and that is how and why He foresees it.

G. “**This** Jesus hath God raised up (verse 32)”: Peter continues, building on David’s prophecy, specifying it was **this Jesus**, not David, and not any other.

H. “He (Christ Jesus the Lord) hath shed forth **this**, which ye now see and hear”: the sending of the Holy Spirit, with His enabling power, was the moving cause whereby the apostles spoke in foreign languages, the cause of Peter’s sermon, and all else that transpired in Jerusalem that day.

I. “Now when they heard **THIS**...(verse 37)”: When they heard Peter’s God-inspired sermon, explaining—

—the fact that God was blessing the apostles’ speaking in such a way that their hearers heard in their own native-born languages,

—the fact they were not drunk,

—the fact that all **THIS** had to do with what one of the Hebrew prophets had said,

—the fact that THIS pertained to the predestinated death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah/Christ,

—the fact that their beloved king David had prophesied of THIS Christ,

—the fact that THIS Jesus Christ was of David's direct descendants, "the fruit of his loins," the legitimate heir to David's throne, David's oldest living descendant, heir-apparent,

—the fact that God had sworn to David with an oath(!) that He would set THIS Jesus, THIS Christ-Messiah, not only on God's throne (where He presently resides), but, at some time subsequent to His resurrection, the Lord God would also set Him in His resurrected flesh on David's throne,

—the fact that Christ has received of the Father's hand THIS, the promised Holy Spirit,

—the fact that the resurrected and glorified Christ is the One who has shed forth "THIS, which ye now see and hear," and,

—the fact that "God hath made **that** same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Messiah/Christ."

When they heard THIS, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It takes the entire scene, the entire chapter including Peter's sermon, its subject, and the God-given outcome of three thousand baptized converts—it takes all this AND MORE to explain and answer the question, **What is the *this*, and what is the *that* of verse 16?**

J. "Save yourselves from **this** untoward generation (verse 40)": It may seem a bit anticlimactic, but "THIS untoward generation" carries in it the seed of the persecution the Jews later unleashed upon the early church. This untoward generation is as much of the "this is that" as the coming of the Holy Spirit in power, the speaking in foreign languages, Peter's sermon, even the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus the Lord.

They all go together as part and parcel of Joel's prophecy. No one can separate out the day of Pentecost, the prophecy, the sermon, or the gospel from the untoward generation. Peter did not say, "These things are what Joel prophesied about"; he said, **THIS IS THAT.**" Still, we have not actually

touched on the details of Joel's prophecy or why Peter quoted it as his preaching-text.

**"THAT...."**

2. Now, we turn very briefly to the word "**that**" as it occurs in this chapter. **The word *that*** occurs sixteen times in Acts 2. Not every *that* is **that which was spoken by the prophet Joel**. Fifteen times out of sixteen (once each in verses 6, 14, 20, 21, 24, 25, 29, 31, 39, 41, 44, twice in verse 30, and twice in verse 36), the word is used either to introduce a subordinate clause or used as a demonstrative pronoun (as in "all ye **that** dwell at Jerusalem," "it was not possible **that** he should be holden of it," "because **that** every man heard them speak in his own language," etc.).

One use remains, the key use in verse 16: "But **this** is **that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel." All ten of the "*this*"-es have to do with *this* one **that**. **That** which was spoken by the prophet in Joel 2.28-32, as quoted by Peter in Acts 2.17-21. It is to *this* one **that** to which we would next attend: What did Joel say, what did he mean, and why did Peter use Joel's text as the basis of his sermon on the day of Pentecost?

In Part II, I hope to continue investigating these and related questions. May God bless His people with an understanding of His truth.

—C. C. Morris

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## THIS AND THAT, PART II: JOEL 2.28-31

28 *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 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 (Joel 2.28-31).*

**W**hen the day of Pentecost was fully come, Peter said that “This,” i.e., that which was occurring in Jerusalem on that day, “is THAT which was spoken by the prophet Joel,” and he quoted this prophecy from Joel.

A valid question is: Was “that” to which Peter and Joel referred *only* what happened on that one day of Pentecost, or was that day only a part of a greater “that”? By way of illustration, consider: If someone lays his hand on the hood of his automobile and says “That is my car,” does he mean *only* the hood is his car (or his car is only a hood)? Or does he not rather mean that *the hood and all the machinery attached to it* is his car? In like manner, then, we need to see from Joel *exactly what is attached* to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Only then, and not until we are given to see what Joel has to say, will we be ready to comment on Peter’s quote from Joel in Acts 2.

I do not recall ever hearing any sermon or reading any article that examined why the prophecy of Joel was used as a foundation and background for Peter’s sermon. Such an examination is exactly what we hope to conduct here in Part II.

### A RULE AND AN EXAMPLE

First, before we even begin, let us look at one of the primary rules for studying Scripture: When an Old Testament (OT) verse is quoted in the New Tes-

tament (NT), by reading the verses preceding and following the quoted OT verse we can gain additional information about the New Testament subject and why the OT verse was quoted.

As an example, consider Judas Iscariot: Very little is actually known about Judas Iscariot’s background from reading the gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, shortly before the day of Pentecost arrived, Peter told the church that David had prophesied concerning Judas, “*Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas...it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take (Acts 1.16-20).*”

From this we are immediately and unerringly informed that Psalm 69.25 and Psalm 109.8 are not vague generalities; they are specific prophecies of Judas. We do not need to run to commentaries to see if this is true; we have God’s word for it. We know Judas is the subject of these verses, not because it seems like a good thing to apply these texts to him, not just because “they seem to fit,” but because, by Peter’s God-inspired quote, the Holy Spirit tells us that these passages from the Psalms are about Judas.

Since God says that Psalm 69.25 is about Judas, then what else can we next learn about him from this Psalm?

1. *Judas and someone else* (verse 26 says “they,” not just “he”) *persecute Him [Christ] whom Thou hast smitten [Isaiah 53.4] and talk to the grief of those whom Thou hast wounded [Isaiah 53.6]*. Here, we are given a glimpse of Judas’ conniving ways and how they related to the lives of Christ and His people.

2. Verses 27-28 indicate that Judas and the “they” who were included with him were barred from coming into God’s righteousness (which is only in Christ);

3. “They” were blotted out of the book of the living (i.e., they either died or were killed), and

4. “They” were not to be “written with the righteous”—they were reprobated.

Verse 29 returns to Christ as its subject.

We now turn to Psalm 109.8: “Let his days be few; and let another take his office.” What else does this Psalm say about Judas? The next verses say:

*Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds,*

*and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul. (Psalm 109.9-20).*

This extended quote tells the reader that Judas came from a family whom the Lord reprobated in its entirety, including Judas' wife and children. They were not only cursed; they were reduced to poverty-stricken beggars who died "in the generation following" (probably in the destruction by the Romans in AD 70).

From this one example the interested reader of the Scriptures may see the value of reading the verses surrounding passages that are quoted by other biblical writers and speakers. It is because of this principle that I propose to look at Joel's entire prophecy as the context of Peter's quotation. Even as the entire 109th Psalm provides the context for Peter's quote of verse 8, and the entire 69th Psalm does the same for verse 25, so Joel's prophecy of only three chapters provides the context of the text Peter quoted.

### **ONE PENTECOST AMONG MANY**

The Pentecost of Acts 2 was not merely a one-time event. Israel observed the feast of Pentecost every year. The details of this annual feast are given in Leviticus 23.15-21.

Reading Acts 2 casually, it might appear that Peter meant Joel only prophesied about what happened on

that one particular day of Pentecost when Peter was speaking. Most who comment on Acts 2 appear to assume that such is the case, never seeming to check what Joel said in his little book. Checking with Joel, however, is what I propose to do now, because so much is to be learned from the Lord's inspired word by examining the apostle Peter's quote in its original context, as we did in the example about Judas, above.

### **JOEL—WHO, WHEN, WHY?**

According to men who profess to know, Joel prophesied around 800 BC. That would have been before the ten northern tribes of Israel were carried into Assyrian captivity (721 BC) and long before Judah was carried into Babylon (606 BC).

These captivities were coming due to the idolatry and other sins of Israel. In chapter 1, Joel foretells a devastating plague of locusts (according to the Bible dictionaries the palmerworm, cankerworm, and caterpillar were different stages in the locusts' development and growth), and these locusts prefigured a coming invasion by the armies of Israel's enemies, making a twofold prophecy: What the locusts would do to Israel's crops, the armies would do to their people and their land.

Joel speaks of the coming **day of the Lord** five times. "The day of the Lord" in Scripture will be what is generally referred to as "the battle of Armageddon," that great event when Christ returns to destroy His enemies (Revelation 16.16). In Joel's day the ruin of Israel's land was coming, first by their crops being destroyed by hordes of insects, followed by their nation being destroyed by hordes of invading troops. This was to the Israelites sufficient devastation for it to be prophetically linked with what Armageddon will in due course be to the entire world.

### **BLOW THE TRUMPET**

Twice God's word is given by Joel, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion (2.1 and 2.15)." "Zion" is a section of Jerusalem built on a peak named Mount Zion. By this we know Joel was writing primarily to the people of Judah because Jerusalem/Zion was Judah's capital.

In God's economy, the trumpet was always used for one of two things: either (1) to sound an alarm, or (2) to assemble God's people. Once each way Joel uses this command to blow the trumpet: as an alarm, and as a call to assemble God's people.

## 1. THE TRUMPET OF ALARM

*Blow ye 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 cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations (Joel 2.1f).*

A lack of space prohibits quoting more of this prophecy here. We will have reason enough to refer to **the day of the Lord** before we are done with Peter's quote of Joel. For now, notice the similarity of language between Joel 2.2:

*A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness...there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.*

and Christ's words in Matthew 24.21:

*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

There can only be one "worst" of anything. Joel's words are qualified: "There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even to the years of many generations.*" This indicates that, however long after "the years of many generations" it might be, there will be the **day of the Lord** that will be an even greater destruction than the imminent calamity to which Joel refers.

Unlike Joel's words, however, Christ's words are unqualified. The invasion Joel described was unprecedented until the time it actually took place; but his prophecy leaves the way open for a greater invasion yet to come that will be the greatest time of trouble ever, in all the past history of the world and all of the future; that is the tribulation Christ foretold. The great tribulation He describes (Matthew 24.21) will be the absolute worst time of trouble there ever has been, from the beginning of the world to the end of time, bar none. It can only be exemplified by the fiery overthrow of Sodom for its catastrophic severity and the flood of Noah's day for worldwide magnitude. The depravity

of the days of Noah and Lot will pale when compared to the unbridled depravity mankind will display in the days just before **the day of the Lord**. Such corruption will warrant God's righteous judgment on a world gone mad with sin.

Also, you may compare Joel 2.1-11 with Revelation 9.1-11 to see how this particular "locust judgment" is applied on a worldwide, yet-future basis, not to Israel in *that* day, but to all the nations of the world.

## 2. THE TRUMPET OF ASSEMBLY

*Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. (Joel 2.15f)."*

The latter use of a trumpet (to call an assembly of God's people) is why a trumpet is linked with the resurrection of the departed saints. The resurrection trumpet will be for the assembling of God's people from all ages. No trumpet, by the way, is ever so associated with the raising of the dead reprobates (none of whom are the Lord's people) to face their final judgment.

This second trumpet-sound, **to call a solemn assembly**, parallels and thereby prophesies the resurrection of the saints for the following reasons:

1. "...*let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber*":

Here are two important terms: the **bridegroom** and His **chamber**.

(a) The bridegroom always represents the Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship to His people. At present, He has not yet gone forth from His chamber. He is still seated at the right hand of His Father. At the time of His going forth He is, among other things, going forth to gather His bride unto Himself: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him (Matthew 25.6)."

(b) His **chamber** (Hebrew, *cheder*, innermost chamber): The innermost chamber of our Lord cannot be other than **the heavenly Holy of Holies** that found its earthly counterpart in the Holy of Holies, first in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in Solomon's temple.

*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the*

right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of **the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.** 3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5 Who serve unto **the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount** (Hebrews 8.1-5).

What Old Testament Israel had under Moses and Aaron was an earthly counterpart of the heavenly abode of God, *the sanctuary...the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.* Men pitched tents below; God built the sanctuary above. Israel built the tabernacle after the *pattern* of God's eternal and heavenly sanctuary. The earthly tabernacle in the wilderness was a three-dimensional *shadow of heavenly things*. It was never an end in itself.

"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for **the sun**, which is **as a bridegroom** coming out of his chamber (Hebrew, *chuppah*, chamber, closet, defence), and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race (Psalm 19.4-5)."

"*The sun, which is as a bridegroom*" is a double symbol of Christ. In the Scriptures He is represented as both a Sun and a Bridegroom. "For the LORD God is a **sun** and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory...(Psalm 84.11)." "He that hath the bride is the **bridegroom** [Christ]: but the friend [John the Baptist] of the **bridegroom**, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the **bridegroom's** voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (John 3.29)."

The sun (Psalm 19 and elsewhere) is a metaphor for the Lord Jesus Christ: "*For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.* 2 *But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...(Malachi 4.1f).*" Even in nature the sun has both the God-given power to scorch and kill, and the

power to heal. In like manner, Christ will destroy His enemies with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2.8). The same glory and brightness that destroys His enemies will only transform His resurrected people into His glorified likeness. "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is* (1 John 3.2)."

2. "...*the bride out of her closet.*"

Here are two more important terms: the **bride** and her **closet**.

(a) The **bride**: The bride invariably represents the elect body of Christ's people. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready (Revelation 19.7)." "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife (Revelation 21.9)."

(b) Her **closet** (Hebrew, *chuppah*, a canopy): Translated in the KJV as *chamber, closet, defence*. This is not a closet as we might think of, such as a clothes-closet or a broom-closet. Think "**close** it" for "closet"—a shelter that will be closed protectively around Christ's bride. As a canopy in nature shelters His people from harsh elements—wind, rain, cold, or heat, so at the time of Armageddon His bride will be sheltered and protected.

*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* 20 *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers* (Hebrew, *cheder*), *and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* 21 *For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* (27:1) **In that day** the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea (Isaiah 26.19-27.1).

After the destruction of Christ's enemies during that battle of Armageddon, after the crooked serpent (Satan) is bound in the bottomless pit, then the glory of the fiery cloud and pillar will hover over the entire restored city of Jerusalem as it did over Israel in the wilderness::

*In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. 5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence (Hebrew, **chuppah**). 6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain (Isaiah 4.2-6).*

The interrelated texts of Joel 2.15f, Psalm 19.4f, Isaiah 4.5, and Isaiah 26.20 tell us that both the Bridegroom and the bride have an "innermost chamber/closet" (a *cheder*) and a defense-chamber/closet covering of glory (a *chuppa*). They are not in separate apartments. They are to be shared by the Bridegroom and His bride as "the bridal suite." This may provide a clue about what the **place** is that He **went to prepare** (in John 14.2). She is immediately transported to this place of safety "and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast," while the Lord Jesus Christ expresses His divine indignation against His enemies; "to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" and "shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent."

3. At the trumpet-sound at the resurrection, God's people will be gathered together in one place for the first time: "the elders," "the children," "the babes," yea, all who live in the glorious Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who will then be with His bride completely, literally, and eternally, together at last in every sense of the word.

## PAST AND FUTURE

Joel shows in verse 17 that the destruction coming in his day would bring Israel to repentance; first in Old Testament times, and then it will happen again—the parallel continues—at the final **day of the Lord**.

In verse 18 God says, "THEN will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people." Then, *when?*

A. Verse 19-27 (*Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen*, etc.) parallels Ezekiel 36.29-30 (*I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen*.), for both texts speak of the same time when, God having brought the nation of Israel back into their land and having converted them, He will again bless them with both spiritual and material abundance; and,

B. Verse 20 (*But I will remove far off from you the northern army [see Ezekiel 38.6, 15], and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea [the Dead Sea], and his hinder part toward the utmost sea [Mediterranean], and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour [literally, a stench of rotting flesh] shall come up, because he hath done great things*) parallels Ezekiel 39.11-13:

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the [Mediterranean] sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD.*

This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. It has not happened yet. When, then, will this come to be? It will be **after** the Lord Jesus Christ destroys Israel's enemies **in that day**, that is, **the day of the Lord**.

*Question: How do you know this was not fulfilled already in Old Testament times?*

Reply: Some of the ways we know this are: (a) Gog has never invaded Israel as described, nor has Gog been so destroyed and buried in Israel; (b) Israel as yet has not ceased to be a reproach among the nations; (c) Israel has not yet been brought to “know that I [the Lord Jesus Christ] am in the midst of Israel, and that I [the Lord Jesus Christ] am the LORD your God, and none else (verse 27)” ; and (d) Israel has not yet been brought to the point twice stated, in verses 26-27, “My people shall **never** be ashamed.” Until these and other points are realized, we may know that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.

All we have considered thus far may be considered introductory material, based on the writings of Joel, a Hebrew prophet, about eight hundred years before Christ. In summary up to here, Israel’s immediate problem in Joel’s day was a coming plague of locusts to be followed by an invasion of their land; yet, God uses all that has gone before (Joel 1.1 to 2.27) as an illustration of what will come in a much later time. The remainder of Joel’s prophecy tells God’s people of the final **day of the Lord** and what will befall Israel and the nations of this world in the time of the end. We come now to the text at the heading of this article: Joel 2.28-31.

### THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The first two verses in each passage (Joel 2.28-29 and Acts 2.17-18) set forth **the administration of God in the book of Acts**, chapters 2 through 28. These two verses (four, considering both passages) describe what is often called “the apostolic age,” the **beginning** of this era that spans from then until now.

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions* (verse 28). **Afterward:** This “afterward” must follow the double destruction by (1) the locusts and (2) the invading armies of Old Testament times. **Afterward** must also follow the restoration of Israel to their land after Israel’s OT captivities, because (a) Joel says it will be “afterward,” and (b) Peter said, “**This**,” the pouring out of God’s Spirit on the day of Pentecost, “is **that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Peter then linked the pouring out of God’s Spirit in Acts 2 with

Joel’s “*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.*” Thus, between the two passages, Joel and Peter bracket in exactly how “afterward” is to be understood.

A question that must be addressed is: Was the entire quote from Joel, including the “wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun...turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,” etc., all fulfilled in Acts 2 on that one day of Pentecost, or is this a prophecy of something far more extensive?

For a number of reasons, Joel’s prophecy was more far-reaching than just that one day. It was a prophecy of the entire “church age,” if I may call it that, the period of time reaching from *at least* the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached as recorded in Acts 2, until the second advent or the return of the Lord Jesus Christ with power and great glory (Matthew 24.30, Luke 21.27), which is still future from where we presently are in time.

Using Joel 2.28-29 as a starting point, what Peter said in Acts 2.17-18 describes what God did in the apostolic times in the book of Acts. It is the beginning of the “church” era in which we live.

Joel put it this way: “And it shall come to pass **afterward**, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”

Peter put it this way: “And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”

Peter defines Joel’s “afterward” as **the last days**. Not just “the last **day**.” “The last day” will be

(a) the day of the resurrection: “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should *raise it up again at the last day*. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will *raise him up at the last day* (John 6.39-40).” “Martha saith unto Him, I know that he [Martha’s brother Lazarus] shall rise again in the resurrection *at the last day* (John 11.24).”

(b) the day of the judgment: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him **in the last day** (John 12.48).”

**The last days** (plural), however, cover a much longer time and many events including **the last DAY** (singular), which embraces both the resurrection and the judgment. We must reserve judgment on what **the last days** are until we examine what the Bible says about them. There are at least two of them (perhaps more?), because they are *days*, plural. They include:

(a) What will happen to Israel in the end times; the record begins in Genesis 49.1: “And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you **in the last days**.” This is not merely the last days of the earthly lives of Jacob’s twelve sons, but it includes their descendants for untold centuries to come. The term covers the tribe of Levi being divided among the other tribes (verse 7), the royal throne being established in the tribe of Judah, and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as Judah’s descendant (verse 10ff). Jacob’s prophecy reaches *at least* to present-day Israel.

(b) “And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Isaiah 2.2).” Daniel 2 tells the reader that mountains in prophecy are a symbol of kingdoms; Isaiah, then, is saying that Christ’s *kingdom* will subdue the *kingdoms of all nations*. Micah 4.1 says the same thing.

(c) Peter’s statement in Acts 2.17: “And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, saith God, *I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh....*” Not all flesh individually, but all nations representatively—God has a people redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Revelation 5.9). This embraces *at least* the period of time from when the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles until “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11.25).”

“...and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy....” Fulfilled in Acts 21.8-10.

“...and your young men shall see visions....” Fulfilled in the book of Acts (9.10, 12; 10.3, 17, 19; 16.9-10, etc.).

“...and your old men shall dream dreams....”: Fulfilled in the book of Acts as above. “Dreams” in the Bible sense are visions one has while asleep.

“...and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy”: Fulfilled in the book of Acts 21.8-10 and other places.

(d) “This know also, that **in the last days** perilous times shall come (2 Timothy 3.1).” Even though Paul was living in perilous times, this is worded in a way that looks toward the last days of the church era as we have known it. It is much like Peter’s prophecy in the next point (e), immediately following.

(e) “Knowing this first, that there shall come **in the last days** scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (2 Peter 3.3f).” This links the last days with scoffers’ disbelief of the promise of Christ’s coming. Such disbelief and scoffing is not limited to the children of the world; it has saturated large portions of the professing “church” as well.

### THE TIME OF THE END

As Joel 2.28-29 describes the **beginning** of this period known generally as the church age, so the next two verses, 30-31, describe what will be happening at the time of its **end**.

*And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come*, Joel says.

In almost the exact same words Peter says, *And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come*.

For over forty-five years I tried in vain to “spiritualize” this text and somehow apply it to the day of Pentecost. There are some who are satisfied to do so, but I am not one of them. When we check the references to such cataclysmic events in the heavens and on the earth, we will find these things are not associated with the day of Pentecost but with the return of Christ in judgment.

In Matthew 24 the disciples asked Jesus these questions. “Tell us”:

1. “When shall these things be?”
2. “What shall be the sign of thy coming?”

3. “What shall be the sign of the end of the age [Greek, *αιων*, *aion*, age]?”

There is much controversy about how these questions should be viewed and answered. Most of the disagreement stems from the different approaches men use to “interpret” the Bible. These approaches involve (a) whether one views the Scriptures as literal or symbolic; (b) whether the Scriptures are speaking of something in the past, the present, the future, or a combination of two or more of these; and (c) whether their view of prophetic Scripture is Amillennial, Postmillennial, or Premillennial.

One of the big problems in discussing prophecy is simply whether or not a person may read plain language from the Bible and believe it. (“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”—Matthew 19.26). Are we entitled to believe God has said plainly what He means, or must we believe He was being obscure in His prophetic word?

To understand the Bible, one must certainly, above all else, have the enlightening of God’s Holy Spirit. But this, the child of God has. “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into **all truth**: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you **things to come** (John 16.13).”

In Matthew 24.3, the disciples asked three questions, not just one. As three questions, they need to be addressed separately, not lumped together. Multitudes lump these questions and answers together because

1. They wrongly think the end of the age (question #3) and the second coming of Christ (question #2) MUST somehow coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem (question #1); these are the ones who believe the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the second coming of Christ and “the end of the world” (as some say, “the end of the Jewish world.” Others say it was “the end of the world, period.”) or,

2. They wrongly think the end of the age referred to in question #3 is the end of the *Old Testament Jewish age*, because in their minds they link question #3 with question #1, instead of with **the age that will end at the return of Jesus Christ the Lord**, thereby more properly linking question #3 with question #2. These are those who believe “the end of the world” means the end of the *Jewish world*” and that Christ

returned “providentially” or “spiritually” to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70. These brethren may or may not allow that the doctrine of the yet future return of Jesus Christ (for the judgment of all mankind) will be literal.

3. They do not read carefully and *exactly* what Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 say. There are differences in the wording, and they record what Christ said in different places, circumstances, and times: Luke records what Christ said on the same subject while still in the temple (21.1-2, 37), so what He said there should possibly be considered first. In Luke 21 Christ addresses two questions: #1, above, and “**What sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?**”

Matthew and Mark record what Christ said on the Mount of Olives after He left the temple; so they must necessarily follow Luke’s account.

In Matthew 23.38-24.1, Christ left the temple the final time before His crucifixion. Then, in chapter 24, He addresses the three questions given above.

In Mark, who evidently writes of the same time and place as Matthew, Christ addresses question #1 and “**What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?**”

4. They may have preconceived notions about what the end times will be like. Such must therefore force-fit any and every verse and its interpretation into their way of seeing things. If they have never heard such and such a thing, they do not *want* to hear it, if it differs from their view, **even if it is directly from the Scriptures**. In that respect, their reasoning is no better than that of the ones who say, “*I don’t care what the Bible says; I believe God loves everybody equally and without discrimination!*”

These errors either spring from the figurative, spiritualizing, Amillennial/preterist approach to interpreting the Scriptures, which we have received from Origen and Augustine through Rome, or else they contribute to that approach. Like two snakes, each eating the other by the tail, the two both feed each other and feed upon one another in a never-ending circle.

The magnitude of what the Bible actually says about signs and prophecies of Christ’s return is staggering. There are seven signs Joel and Peter give:

1. Wonders in the heavens
2. [Wonders] in the earth

3. Blood
4. Fire
5. Pillars of smoke.
6. The sun shall be turned into darkness
7. The moon [shall be turned] into blood

None of these are expressly stated to have happened the day Peter preached. They are “before that great, terrible, and notable **day of the Lord come.**”

It could be argued, of course, that the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) was certainly *before* the day of the Lord. Yes, it was, but that is not how the text is to be used; it is not worded so as to convey that meaning. The first two verses describe the introduction of the gracious apostolic age, while the next two verses describe the judgements at the end of the church era. To this the prophets agree:

“And I will plead against him with pestilence and with **blood**; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, **fire**, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 38.22).”

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and **fire** mingled with **blood**, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with **fire** was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became **blood**; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8.7ff).”

The first time a **pillar of smoke** is mentioned in the Bible is in Judges 20.40: “But when the **flame** began to arise up out of the city with a **pillar of smoke**, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the **flame** of the city ascended up to heaven.” By *the law of first mention* (where something is first mentioned in the Bible, it always has special significance), we should expect **the pillars of smoke** (Joel 2.30) to be of literal destruction by fire and flame on this earth and not “figurative” or “symbolic” of something that occurred on the day of Pentecost.

First, there is no reason not to understand the fire and smoke as literal, because the Scriptures plainly say this world will be dissolved and melted with fervent

heat. Second, because the first mention of a the pillar of smoke was the smoke from a burning city, Gibeah. This is totally in harmony with the destruction that will come upon many of the cities of this world, as described in Revelation, in the days preceding the second advent of Christ.

“Behold, **the day of the LORD** cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: **the sun shall be darkened** in his going forth, and **the moon shall not cause her light to shine**. And I will punish **the world** [not merely the Jews] for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger (Isaiah 13.9-13).”

In chapter 3, Joel says: “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision. **The sun and the moon shall be darkened**, and the stars shall withdraw their shining (Joel 3.12-15).”

“Immediately after **the tribulation of those days** [*which days?*] shall **the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars** shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and **then** shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and **then** shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24.29ff).”

“But in those days, *after that tribulation*, **the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light**, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And **then** shall they

see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And **then** shall He send His angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven (Mark 13.24ff).”

“And there shall be **signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars**; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26 Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21.25ff).”

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and **the moon into blood**, before that great and notable **day of the Lord** come (Acts 2.20, Peter quoting Joel).”

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and **the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood**; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind (Revelation 6.12f).”

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of **the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon**, and the third part of the stars; so as **the third part of them was darkened**, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise (Revelation 8.12).”

Some will tell us that all of this has already happened. “All of this,” they say, “is just symbolic of the collapse of the Jewish law-system.”

Reply: Such a comment ignores the uniform testimony of Scripture, not merely of God’s doing away with the Jews’ legalism, but also of His resolving His controversy with Satan, demons, and mankind.

*Objection: The pillars of smoke are symbolic, not literal. They symbolize the smoke and fire that sat on the disciples in Acts 2.*

Reply: Again. There is no smoke mentioned in Acts 2 in connection with the cloven tongues **like as** of fire. The wording, “cloven tongues **like as** of fire,” using both **like** and **as**, shows that it was not a real fire, but a similitude, comparison, or resemblance.

The only reference to “vapors of smoke” in Acts 2 follows the wonders in heaven above and the earth beneath, including **fire**. The fact that God says “I will **show** wonders” indicates these will be **visible** signs men will be able to **see**, so that men’s hearts will fail them for fear and for **looking** after those things which are coming on the earth... (Luke 21.26).

The first time smoke is mentioned in the Bible is Genesis 19.28: “And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the **smoke** of the country went up as the **smoke** of a furnace.” Was that “figurative smoke,” or was it literal smoke? Christ said, “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained **fire and brimstone from heaven**, and destroyed them all. Even **thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed** (Luke 17.29f).” Peter said God “turn[ed] the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into *ashes* (2 Peter 2.6).” The last time smoke is mentioned in the Bible is a three-fold reference to the destruction of Babylon, yet future: “...the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the **smoke of her burning**... And cried when they saw **the smoke of her burning**, saying, What city is like unto this great city... And her **smoke** rose up for ever and ever (Revelation 18.9, 18; 19.3).”

Texts could be multiplied, but for now we forbear. The point is made throughout the Bible: In Noah’s day, God destroyed the earth that then was, and all mankind with it, except His elect, and He destroyed it and renewed it with water. The uniform testimony of Scripture is that He will do the same thing a second time, but then it will be with fire. The obscuring of the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars) will be caused by the smoke, vapor clouds, and dust in the air caused by the other calamities (earthquakes and volcanoes, with meteors and asteroids crashing into the oceans and land masses of the earth).

*Objection: Solomon said, “Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke... (S. S. 3.6).” So the pillars of smoke can be symbolic.*

Reply: People who speak thus do not surprise me when they say they think Hell itself is figurative. Again, as above, Solomon’s use of the word **like** shows he was using a simile. Neither Joel nor Peter in quoting him said anything was **like** pillars of smoke,

etc. Thus we should consider them to be literal pillars of smoke, along with real blood, real hail, real fire, and whatever else God says.

We all profess to believe the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 1-12) literally, really, truly happened; water was turned to blood, there were plagues of frogs, lice, flies, disease of cattle, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn children, and we all say, "Oh, yes, certainly, we believe those things really, really happened in Moses' day!"

Then we read in the book of Revelation and in the other prophetic books of God sending **the same plagues**—boils, hail, locusts, death, water being turned to blood, and the sun and moon turned into darkness—at the time He halts this world's insanity; and then someone tells us that in order for us to be "orthodox" we must say: "Oh, no, that is figurative language only! It is symbolic of the Turks, Constantine the Great, the stock-market crash, Adolf Hitler, the Crusades, Rome and the pope, World War II B-25 bombers with machine-guns in their tails, Muhammadanism, the collapse of Judaism. It means Napoleon Bonaparte, pollution of the environment, the Reformation, the Mongol hordes, and President Lincoln's (or JFK's) assassination. Say it is anything you please. Just remember to say the book of Revelation is NOT to be taken literally!"

### JOEL 3

Joel's prophecy does not end with the verses Peter quoted. It continues in the next chapter and the subject does not change.

*For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem (3.1):* The "For" connects what preceded it (chapter 2) with what follows (chapter 3). "In those days, and in that time" shows God is still speaking of **the day of the Lord** at the end of this era, when as yet "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."

The phrase, "*I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem*" is a term that means God will bring Judah and Jerusalem *back again* from captivity: "For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and **I will cause**

**them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it (Jeremiah 30.3).**"

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me... (Jeremiah 39.25f)."

"And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And **I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God (Amos 9.14f).**" This prophecy could not have been fulfilled until 1948 at the earliest, because until then they had been "pulled up out of their land" which the Lord has given Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants forever. If the present destructive forces have their way, and Israel is "pulled up out of their land" again, this prophecy must wait until the time when Jehovah does plant them in their land, and they are **never** pulled up out of it again. It is my belief that what is happening in Israel's land today is *at least* the beginning of the final fulfillment of this prophecy; they will never again be uprooted from the **holy land** (that, "holy land," is what God has called it—Zechariah 2.12).

Verse 2—"I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." All nations means exactly that: all nations, at least in their representative form of the United Nations or some similar organization professing to represent **all nations**. Among the crimes with which Jehovah charges the nations in this verse and those following, not to be overlooked, is the crime of "parting **my** land." The holy land, the Promised Land, the Land of Israel, is God's land. He claims it. He pronounces tremendous judgments upon **the nations** who take it upon themselves to partition that piece of real estate He has given to His chosen nation, dividing it between Israel and her enemies who are committed to her destruction. Whatever nations so partition Israel deserve whatever God in Christ will do to them at His coming.

The verses in Joel 3.3-8 (which we will not quote here or address in detail because of space) are not only a historical retrospective, but they also anticipate the final invasion of Israel by **the nations** of the world immediately leading up to Armageddon. Hence the Lord, with derisive humor, challenges **the nations** of this world:

*Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat...(verses 9-12).*

The United Nations Organization has quoted part of Isaiah 2.4, in their plaza across from their building on First Avenue (“United Nations Plaza”) in New York City. On a granite wall at the park’s northwest corner, they inscribed: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Following Satan’s well-established practice of quoting parts of verses out of context, they left out the most important part of this verse: “**And he [the LORD] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people.**” This is preceded in the Bible (but not on the UN’s granite) by the words, “And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” It is this, coupled with the LORD’s judging among **the nations** and His rebuking many people (literally, *peoples*) that will be the only thing that will bring about **the nations’** beating their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks, so that **nation** shall not lift up sword against **nation**, neither learn war any more. Only when the Prince of Peace manifests His dominion over His enemies and over

all mankind will He introduce this era of universal peace, and not before. Certainly universal peace will not be brought about by the corrupt UN.

*Swords and spears* are representative of weapons of war. *Plowshares and pruning hooks* are representative implements of farming and agriculture. As if the nations of the world are not already committed to a military economy, God challenges them by Joel’s prophecy to convert more and more of their resources to produce weaponry and to bring it all up against Jerusalem, there to be destroyed.

Verse 11: *Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.* The “heathen” (Gentiles, nations, peoples, heathen are all one and the same) will be brought into a conflict with Jehovah Himself. The mighty ones the Lord causes to come down are His mighty angels, reaping God’s field (the world): “**The field is the world** (*kosmos*); the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (*aion*, age); and **the reapers are the angels.** As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth **his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity**; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. **Then** shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13.38-43).” The removal of the tares to the everlasting burnings, followed by the unmolested glory of the saints in Christ’s kingdom on earth, is just about opposite to the way the end of this age is usually presented. Usually men say that Christ will remove His people into some heavenly realm and destroy everything that is left behind. How strange the contrast is between how Christ said it will be and how men say it will be!

Joel 3, verse 12: *Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.*

This verse answers perfectly to Matthew 25.31-46. (All cannot be quoted here due to space): “**When** the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered **all**

**nations:** and He shall separate **them** one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them [**the nations**] on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....” The criterion used in Christ’s judging between those nations who are **as sheep nations** or **as goat nations**, is “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of **these my brethren**, ye have done it unto me.”

This disposal of the nations of this world has nothing to do with eternal salvation. It has everything to do with God’s directly enforcing righteousness on a sovereignly selected segment of rebellious humanity.

At the close of Armageddon, some nations will enter into His kingdom strictly by God’s grace. He starts with the nations that have favored His brethren. Nevertheless He will rule over these nations with a “rod of iron.” “Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with **a rod of iron**; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel (Psalm 2.8f).” “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule **all nations** with **a rod of iron** (Revelation 12.5).” “And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite **the nations**: and He shall rule them with **a rod of iron**: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19.15).” In all four texts where **the rod of iron** is mentioned, the rod is a king’s sceptre. It is not a sceptre of pretty gold and jewels as earthly kings display. It is of iron, denoting in the most literal sense the governmental authority, power, strength, and severity necessary to enforce judgment, justice, holiness, righteousness, and peace.

“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be **no end**, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. **The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this** (Isaiah 9.7).”

—C. C. Morris

(To be continued, Lord willing)

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2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall

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6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

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9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.