



1

Critical Material and Historical Background

- With no superscription, ambiguous historical references, no autobiographical information and no biblical record of a “Joel” or a “Pethuel,” the date and historical background of Joel is difficult to determine and vehemently debated.
 - o Though a post-exilic date is popular trend in *current* scholarship, our approach here will assume a pre-exilic date due primarily to the prophecy of an army coming upon the people in judgment. Also, Zephaniah uses extremely similar language, including “the day of the Lord,” to describe the Babylonian crisis (Zeph. 1:14-18).

2

Key Themes

The Judgment of Yahweh

- o Repeatedly cast as an element of “the day of the LORD,” the imagery of the judgment that Yahweh will bring on his own people because of their sin is devastating. Yahweh demands covenant loyalty and holiness and the consequences for disobedience are unthinkable severe and bad, despite his promised mercy on the other side of judgment, another element of “the day of the LORD.”

The Spirit of Yahweh

- o In the OT, the Spirit of Yahweh is closely associated with three interrelated elements: Yahweh’s 1) presence 2) power and 3) revelation.
 - When God’s Spirit comes (or “rushes”) upon someone in the OT, they are typically empowered to do certain things or are given wisdom to accomplish certain tasks. The Davidic Messiah, for example, will be one upon whom the “Spirit of Yahweh” rests according to Isaiah 11:2, enabling him to be a wise counselor, mighty, righteous and to delight fully in Yahweh.

3

Prophetic Element Spotlight

- Telescopic Prophecy
 - o Like two mountains that appear to be right next to each other from a distance but are actually many miles apart, the prophets frequently depict events in sequential order without regard for *chronological* distance or despite chronological *disparity*.
 - Joel 2:28:32 provides an excellent example. One would plausibly expect this section to immediately follow (“afterward”) the response of 2:18-27, but it doesn’t occur until hundreds of years later.
 - Furthermore, one might reasonably expect all of the nations to be judged (3:1-16), but this still has not occurred 2000 years after Pentecost (on most people’s understanding).

4

Prophetic Element Spotlight

- The Day of the LORD
 - Synthesizing different descriptions and references throughout the prophetic literature, the “day of Yahweh” is best understood as the ***monumental intervention and action of God in redemptive history***.
 - The coming and occurrence of the “day of the LORD” appears to be historically recurring phenomenon that both points to and culminates in one *final* “day of the LORD” at the end of the world as we know it. Like its precursors, this eschatological “day of the LORD” (i.e., “that day”) will include both judgment and salvation as central elements.

5

Day of the Lord Cont.

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 - The cosmic/astronomical language often used to describe what precedes or indicates the “day of the LORD” (even when the exact phrase is not used) should not confuse a reader into thinking that the end of the world is being described—often, it is not. Instead, the cosmic language is a harbinger of the coming or beginning of the “day of Yahweh,” or a similar instance of judgment.

6

Day of the Lord Cont.

- Isa. 13:1-17
 - Despite the vivid cosmic language, this is an oracle of judgment on Babylon.
- Ez. 32:7-8
 - The “day of Yahweh” is not explicitly mentioned, but note the identical cosmic language used to describe the judgment of Pharaoh (in Ezekiel’s time, not Moses’s).
- Cosmic, poetic imagery for God’s intervention in history
 - Jdgs. 5:4-5; Ps. 18:7-15; Mic. 1:2-4; Nah. 1:2-6; Hab. 3:3-12
- Matt. 24:29
 - While admittedly a debated example, in the tradition of prophetic judgment oracles, Jesus uses the cosmic language to describe the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (24:2-3) before he discusses the unknown hour of his coming and the end of the age (24:26-50; 25:31-46).

7

Role in the Twelve / NT Connection

- Joel introduces the “day of Yahweh” into the Twelve—a key element in God’s remedy for sin—and also introduces the second problem of the Twelve: the nations have also sinned. The sins of Israel/Judah and the nations will be the primary points of contention throughout the rest of the Twelve.

Connection with the New Testament

- Joel 2:28-32
 - o In Acts 2, Peter declares that what Joel had spoken, from the Spirit coming (2:17) to the promise that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord would be saved (2:21), had been fulfilled at Pentecost (2:1-11). Note that Peter paraphrases the “it shall come to pass afterward” of Joel 2:28 as “*in the latter days* it shall be” (Acts 2:17), indicating his understanding that the “latter days” (cf. Hosea 3:6-7) have begun with the giving of the Spirit.
 - o Paul quotes the first part of Joel 2:32 in Rom. 10:13 to indicate the indiscriminate nature of the salvation offered by grace through faith in Jesus. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek because they turn to same Lord and Savior through repentant hearts and confessing mouths (10:8-12).

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