Introduction to the Book of Joel

Author

The book of Joel is attributed to Joel, the son of Pethuel according to Joel 1:1. His name in the Hebrew (יוחנן) means, “the Lord is God.” We know nothing about his personal history and unlike other prophetic there is no information presented in the paragraph of this book which establishes the historical period of his ministry or anywhere else in the Old Testament.

Canonization

The book of Joel is the second book of the Minor Prophets, which are called the Book of the Twelve in the Hebrew Bible. The book is fifth in the order of the Hebrew text. It is only four chapters long preceded by Obadiah and followed by Micah and Nahum. In the Septuagint, Micah is third and Jonah is moved down to sixth between Obadiah and Nahum.

The Old Testament was divided into three sections: (1) The Torah (2) The Prophets (Nabhiim) (3) The Writings (Kethubim). The first section is called the Torah meaning “the Law” contained: (1) Genesis (2) Exodus (3) Leviticus (4) Numbers (5) Deuteronomy. The second section was the Prophets which were divided into two sections: (1) The Former Prophets (2) The Latter Prophets.

The Former Prophets: (1) Joshua (2) Judges (3) Samuel (4) Kings. The Latter Prophets were divided into two categories: (1) Major (2) Minor. Major Prophets: (1) Isaiah (2) Jeremiah (3) Ezekiel. The Minor Prophets were also called the Twelve because they were all contained one book: (1) Hosea (2) Joel (3) Amos (4) Obadiah (5) Jonah (6) Micah (7) Nahum (8) Habakkuk (9) Zephaniah (10) Haggai (11) Zechariah (12) Malachi. The third and last section was called the Writings: (1) The Poetical Books: Psalms, Proverbs and Job (2) The Five Rolls (Megilloth): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther and Lamentations (3) The Historical Books: Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (1 book) and Chronicles.

Date

There is much conjecture among Biblical scholars as to the date that the book was penned. This is because the book is not dated and there is meager chronological evidence. It could have been written anywhere between the ninth and fifth century B.C. However, the internal evidence indicates that the book was written in 835 B.C. There are three major factors which strongly suggest this: (1) The prophetic utterances in the book imply a regency since there is no mention of a
king, which would leave the national leadership in the hands of the elders and priests. 2 Kings 11:4 teaches that Joash was crowned at the age of seven, and his uncle, Jehoiada, is said to have a strong influence in Judah up to the day of his death, which would be in the latter part of Joash’s reign. (2) The book of Amos borrows from Joel. Both Joel 3:18 and Amos 9:13 contain the promise, “The mountains shall drop sweet wine.” Joel 3:16 says, “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem,” which appears at the beginning of the prophecy of Amos. Therefore, Joel must have been written before Amos, which indicate that Joel was written earlier than 755 B.C. (3) The enemies mentioned in Joel which are threatened Judah are the Phoenicians, the Philistines, the Egyptians, and the Edomites (cf Joel 3:4, 19) but there is no reference to the Assyrians or Chaldeans or the Persians. This strongly suggests a period when Assyria and Babylon posed no threat, but Egypt and the surrounding neighbors of Israel were. In the time of Joash, Egypt was still to a power. The kingdom of Judah after the reign of Joash never faced this same array of enemies again.

Robert Chisholm Jr. presents the various views, he writes, “Unlike most other prophetic books, no information is given in the opening verse that establishes the time limits of his prophetic ministry. Thus one is forced to rely on internal evidence in determining a date of authorship. Scholars have proposed various dates, ranging from the ninth to the second centuries b.c. Three views are surveyed here. 1. An early preexilic date. Those who support an early date (ninth century b.c.) for Joel point to its position in the Hebrew Old Testament (between Hosea and Amos) and its references to Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom as enemies (Joel 3:4, 19). Hobart Freeman writes, ‘The very naming of these particular nations is strong evidence for a preexilic date for the book, inasmuch as they were the early preexilic enemies of Judah, not the later nations of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia’ (An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, p. 148; see also Gleason L. Archer, Jr., A Survey of Old Testament Introduction. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, p. 305). Both of these arguments lack weight. The canonical position of the book is inconclusive, especially when one notes that the Septuagint places it differently in the canon. Even the Old Testament prophets in the Babylonian period delivered oracles against the nations mentioned (cf. Jer. 46-47; 49:7-22; Ezek. 27-30; Zeph. 2:4-7). One who contends for a late preexilic date could argue that Joel 2 pictures the Babylonians vividly enough to make formal identification unnecessary to a contemporary audience well aware of their ominous presence on the horizon. Some seek to support an early date for Joel by appealing to the type of government reflected in the prophecy (elders, 1:2; 2:16; and priests ruling, 1:9, 13; 2:17, in view of Joash’s crowning at age seven) and to verbal parallels in other prophetic books (Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, pp. 304-5). The
inconclusive nature of these arguments is apparent as they are also used by proponents of a late date. Several details of the text (cf. esp. 3:2, 6) seem to militate against an early date (in Joash’s reign) for the prophecy (cf. S.R. Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, pp. 14-15). 2. A late preexilic date. The view that the book comes from the late preexilic period has much to commend it. If one dates the prophecy between 597 and 587 b.c. (with Wilhelm Rudolph, Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1971, pp. 24-8), Joel 3:2b (with its reference to scattering God’s people and dividing the land) would refer to the Babylonian invasion of 597 b.c. when 10,000 of Judah’s finest men were deported (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-16). This would also account for Joel’s references to the temple (Joel 1:9, 13; 2:17), for it was not destroyed until 586 b.c. (cf. 2 Kings 25:9). At that same time such a dating would mean that Joel 1:15 and 2:1-11 anticipated the final destruction of Jerusalem (which indeed came in 586 b.c.; cf. 2 Kings 25:1-21). Joel’s prophecy would then fit nicely with several other passages which relate the ‘day of the Lord’ (or ‘day of the Lord’s wrath’ or ‘day of the Lord’s anger’) to that event (cf. Lam. 1:12; 2:1, 21-22; Ezek. 7:19; 13:5; Zeph. 2:2-3). Joel’s description (Joel 2:1-11) would also coincide with Jeremiah’s description of the Babylonians (cf. Jer. 5:17). The reference in Joel 3:6 to slave trade between the Phoenicians and Greeks (or Ionians) harmonizes well with the late preexilic period. Ezekiel also referred to this economic arrangement (Ezek. 27:13). Arvid S. Kapelrud shows that Ionian trade flourished in the seventh and early sixth centuries b.c. (Joel Studies, pp. 154-8). Despite the attractiveness of this view, problems arise in relation to Joel 2:18-19. This passage seems to record God’s mercy to Joel’s generation, implying they truly repented (see comments on those verses). If so, such a sequence of events is difficult to harmonize with the historical record of Judah’s final days. Second Kings 23:26-27 indicates that even Josiah’s revival did not cause the Lord to relent. 3. A postexilic date. Four arguments are used to suggest a postexilic date: (1) Joel 3:1-2, 17 refer, it is argued, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. In this case the references to the temple in 1:9, 13; 2:17 apply to the second temple, completed by the returning exiles in 515 b.c. (2) The ‘elders’ (cf. 1:2; 2:16), rather than the king, appear as the leaders of the community. This is more consistent with the postexilic period (cf. Ezra 10:14). (3) Joel quotes other prophets, including Ezekiel (cf. Joel 2:3 with Ezek. 36:35; Joel 2:10 with Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:27-28 with Ezek. 39:28-29). (4) The reference to Greek slave trade (Joel 3:6) reflects the postexilic period. Against these arguments the following responses may be made: (1) Joel 3:1-2, 17 could refer to the deportation of 597 b.c., not that of 586 b.c. (but as noted previously under 2. A late preexilic date,” this view poses problems). Some attempt to explain the language of Joel 3:1-2, 17 in light of the events recorded in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 (Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, p. 305).
However, the captivity of the royal sons and wives recorded there hardly satisfies the language of Joel 3:2. (2) Though the omission of any reference to the monarchy is curious, it can carry little weight for it is an argument from silence. Also elders were prominent in Judean society before the Exile (2 Kings 23:1; Jer. 26:17; Lam. 5:12, 14; cf. Kapelrud, Joel Studies, pp. 187-9). (3) In the case of literary parallels with other prophetic passages, it is often difficult to determine in any given case who quoted from whom. (4) Kapelrud has shown, as noted earlier, that Ionian slave trade flourished in the seventh century b.c. In conclusion, it is impossible to be dogmatic about the date of the writing of Joel. The language of Joel 3:2b seems to favor a postexilic date. This verse suggests that nations in the future will be judged for having continued the policies of ancient Babylon in scattering the Israelites and dividing their land. Such a view is consistent with (but not proved by) several other observations (such as the reference to Phoenician-Ionian slave trade, the form of government implied in the book, and the literary parallels with other prophets). If one accepts a postexilic date, the references to the temple necessitate a date some time after 516 b.c. However, all this must remain tentative. Understandably, conservative scholars differ on the date of Joel.”

Gleason Archer writes, “The prophecy of Joel has been dated all the way from the ninth century to the fourth century b.c. by the various schools of criticism, conservative and liberal. But on the basis of internal evidence, the most reasonable estimate is in the minority of King Joash (835–796 b.c.), during the regency of Jehoida, the high priest, about 830 b.c. For an excellent presentation of the arguments for an early date, see A. E Kirkpatrick, The Doctrine of the Prophets (1890). These evidences may be listed under three categories: 1. The type of government implied by these prophetic utterances best accords with a regency. There is no mention of a king; the elders and priests seem to bear the responsibility of national leadership. This would seem to imply that the king was a minor and that regents ruled in his place. According to 2 Kings 11:4, Joash was crowned at the age of seven, and his uncle, Jehoiada, is said to have exercised a controlling influence in Judah even to the day of his death, in the latter part of Joash’s reign. 2. There is distinct evidence of borrowing, as between Amos and Joel. For example, both Joel 3:18 and Amos 9:13 contain the promise, ‘The mountains shall drop sweet wine.’ While Joel might possibly have quoted from Amos, the contextual indications are that it was the other way around. Another example is found in Joel 3:16 where in the midst of a prophetic discourse he says, ‘The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.’ This same verse appears at the

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beginning of the prophecy of Amos, and it may fairly be inferred that Amos was using it as a sort of sermon text from which he developed his first message. On this basis, then, Joel must have been written earlier than Amos, that is, earlier than 755 b.c. 3. An even more conclusive argument is found in the array of enemies which are mentioned by the author as threatening Judah. There is no reference to the Assyrians or Chaldeans (to say nothing of the Persians), but the foes of Judah are stated to be the Phoenicians, the Philistines, the Egyptians, and the Edomites (cf Joel 3:4, 19). This points to a period when Assyria and Babylon posed no threat, but Egypt and the surrounding neighbors of Israel were still strong and aggressive. Even in the time of Joash, the power of Egypt was still to be feared; in Rehoboam’s time Shishak (identified with Sheshonkh I, 947–925 b.c.) had ravaged the kingdom and sacked the temple at Jerusalem; and in the reign of Asa occurred the dread invasion of Zerah, the general sent by Osorkon I (925–829) of the Ethiopian dynasty (New Bible Dictionary, p. 1359). In the time of Joash’s grandfather, Jehoram, and even under Jehoshaphat, the Edomites and Philistines made incursions against Judah which were so successful that they even took the city of Jerusalem by storm (cf. 2 Kings 8:20–22; 2 Chron. 21:16–17). At no time after the reign of Joash was the kingdom of Judah faced by this particular assortment of enemies. It should be added that at no time after the Chaldean period could Egypt have been regarded as an aggressive power, for it had all it could do to maintain its own independence. This would seem to eliminate the possibility of a date in the Persian or Greek period. Among non-Conservative critics of more recent times, there is a tendency to date the prophecy of Joel just after the death of Josiah in 609 b.c. This is the position of A. S. Kapelrud (Joel Studies, 1948), who argues that the author was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah and composed the entire book more or less as it stands. Usually, however, the critics place Joel after the Exile, in view of his foreknowledge of the Babylonian captivity (2:32–3:1), but more especially because of the mention of the Greeks (יווניים) in 3:6. They proceed on the assumption that Greeks could not have been mentioned until after the time of the Alexandrian conquest in 330 b.c. But it should be noted that in this context the Greeks are mentioned as a very distant people, and the enormity of the guilt of the Phoenician slave traders is brought out by the fact that they had no scruples about selling Israelite captives even to regions so remote as those inhabited by the Greeks. It cannot be supposed that the Hellenic peoples were unknown to Israel in the pre-exilic period, since they are found mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions as early as the eighth century b.c. Such a reference is quite incompatible with a situation where the Greeks have already made themselves the masters of the whole Persian empire, for at that later period they could not be considered remote from Palestine, as the text clearly implies. (Partly for this reason Pfeiffer prefers to date Joel around 350 b.c., in the time of Alexander’s father,
Philip of Macedon.) These critics also advance the argument that Joel fails to mention the Northern Kingdom or the rule of any king of Judah or even the idolatrous high places (bāmôt). And yet it should be pointed out that none of these things are mentioned in Nahum or Zephaniah either, although both of them are admitted by the critics to date from the seventh century, prior to the Babylonian Exile. As Young points out (IOT, p. 249), there was no particular occasion in Joel to mention the Northern Kingdom by name, for these prophetic discourses were directed only against Judah. It should be added that Joel occasionally employs the name Israel (cf. 2:27; 3:2, 16) in such a way that it cannot be demonstrated conclusively whether it refers to the entire twelve tribes or only to the Northern Kingdom; therefore it is by no means certain that he ignored the latter completely. The critics have also pointed to verses like 1:9, 1:13; and 2:14 as indicating the practice of presenting a continual burnt offering before the Lord in the temple (the so-called tāmīd). They argue that since there is no mention of the tāmīd in the Torah until the P document was added in post-exilic times, Joel must likewise have been post-exilic. But of course this line of reasoning can carry no weight with those who have not already subscribed to the ill-founded Documentary Theory.

Although many critics regard Joel as a single literary unit, there are others like Oesterley and Robinson who hold to a theory of dual authorship. Quite considerable portions of Joel which can be regarded as apocalyptic, they have assigned to 200 b.c. on the ground of its alleged resemblance to inter-testamental apocalyptic productions. Hence they interpret the phrase in 3:6, ‘the sons of the Grecians’ (ASV), to refer to the Seleucid dynasty of Antiochus Epiphanes. Such radical interpretations as these are the outgrowth of an evolutionistic theory, rather than a legitimate deduction from the text itself. According to this view, it was only at a late stage in the history of Israel’s religion that the genre of apocalyptic came into vogue. (By the term apocalyptic is meant that type of prophetic revelation which envisions the miraculous intervention of God in future history to deliver His people from all their foes and to make them supreme in the earth.) The evolutionary view regards this genre as a product of the despair which gripped the Jewish people after they had failed to achieve political greatness or independence by their own efforts. Not until after the disappointments of the fifth and fourth centuries b.c. could the Jews have fallen into such a mood of despair, and turned so exclusively to God as their last and only hope of achieving a national destiny. But here again the force of the argument depends upon evolutionistic and antisupematural assumptions. Extensive radical surgery would be needed to excise all such passages from the pre-exilic prophets. Moreover, it should be observed that by no stretch of the imagination can the Hebrew style of Joel’s prophecy be regarded as belonging to the Persian or Greek period. Its purity of diction and its grammatical constructions point rather to an early pre-exilic date of composition.
To sum up, then, the internal evidence agrees more closely with the period of 835 B.C. for the composition of this prophecy than with any other. The lack of reference to any reigning king on the throne of Judah, the implication that the responsibility of government rests upon the priests and elders, the allusion to the neighboring nations as the current foes of Judah (rather than Assyria, Babylonia, or Persia)—all these factors point quite conclusively to the period of Joash’s minority. The linguistic evidence perfectly accords with this early date and makes a theory of post-exilic composition quite untenable. It is fair to say that the arguments for a late date are largely based upon humanistic philosophical assumptions rather than upon reasonable deduction from the data of the text itself.”

Theme

The theme of the book of Joel is “the day of the Lord,” which is “not” a literal twenty-four period. Rather, it is a period of time beginning with God’s dealing with Israel after the rapture at the beginning of the tribulation period and extending through the Second Advent and the millennial age unto the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

One of the major lines of prophecy running throughout the Old Testament and continuing through the New Testament is the prophetic truth related to the Day of the Lord.

The term “Day of the Lord” occurs in the following passages: Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obadiah 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14 (twice); Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10.

The phrases “that day” or “the day” or “the great day” also refer to the day of the Lord and appear more than 75 times in the Old Testament.

The term “Day of the Lord” and the phrases “that day” or “the day” or the “great day” are used with reference to Daniel’s Seventieth Week (Isaiah 13:5-6; Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 29, 31; 38:10-19; 39:11, 22; Obadiah 14-15; Zephaniah 1:14, 18; 2:2-3; Zechariah 12:3-4, 6, 8-9; Malachi 4:5), the Second Advent of Christ (Zechariah 12:11; 14:4, 6, 8), millennium (Ezekiel 45:22; 48:35; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:9; Zephaniah 3:11), and the creation of the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 2:10).

Therefore, a comparison of these passages indicates that the “day of the Lord” is “not” a literal twenty-four period but rather, it is an extended period of time. It begins with God’s dealing with Israel after the rapture of the church that takes

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place prior to Daniel’s Seventieth Week. It extends through the Second Advent of Jesus Christ and His millennial reign, culminating with the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

The frequency with which the day of the Lord is referred to is evidence of its importance in the plan of God and the passages noted above reveal that the idea of judgment is paramount in all of them. This judgment includes not only the specific judgments upon Israel and the nations at the end of the tribulation that are associated with the Second Advent, but from a consideration of the passages themselves, includes judgments that extend over a period of time prior to the Second Advent. Thus, we can conclude that the Day of the Lord will include the time of the tribulation.

The scope of the Day of the Lord has been a matter of debate among interpreters of the Scriptures. Some refer the Day of the Lord to the years of the tribulation period only while others relate this to the Second Advent of Christ and the subsequent judgments immediately connected with the event.

The first view held by Scofield is that the Day of the Lord would cover that time period from the Second Advent of Christ to the new heaven and new earth after the millennium.

Ironside expresses the other view, which coincides with Scofield’s as to the terminus of the Day of the Lord but begins it with the tribulation period so that the events of the tribulation, Second Advent and millennium are all included within the scope of the Day of the Lord.

Zechariah 14:1-4 makes it clear that the events of the Second Advent are included in the program of the Day of the Lord.

*Zechariah 14:1* A day of the Lord is about to come when your possessions will be divided as plunder in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to wage war; the city will be taken, its houses plundered, and the women raped. Then half of the city will go into exile, but the remainder of the people will not be taken away. 3 Then the Lord will go to battle and fight against those nations, just as he fought battles in ancient days. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which lies to the east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, leaving a great valley. Half the mountain will move northward and the other half southward. (NET Bible)

2 Peter 3:10 gives authority for including the entire millennial age with this period known as the day of the Lord.

*2 Peter 3:10* But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (NASU)
If the Day of the Lord did not begin until the Second Advent, since that event is preceded by signs, the Day of the Lord could “not” come as a “thief in the night,” unexpected, and unheralded, as it is said it will come in 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

1 Thessalonians 5:1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. (NASB95)

The only way this day could break unexpectedly upon the world is to have it begin immediately after the rapture of the church, which is imminent. When an event is truly imminent, we never know exactly when it will happen. So again, the only way that the “day of the Lord” could break unexpectedly upon the world is to have it begin immediately after the rapture of the church, which is imminent.

We thus can conclude that the “day of the Lord” is “not” a literal twenty-four period but rather is an extended period of time beginning with God’s dealing with Israel after the rapture including Daniel’s Seventieth Week and extending through the Second Advent and the millennial age unto the creation of the new heavens and the new earth after the millennium.

The following is a list of characteristics of the Day of the Lord: (1) Imminency (Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Obad. 15; 1 Thess. 5:2). (2) Judgment (Obad. 15, Joel 1.15; Isa. 2:11; Jer, 46:10; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:7ff; Ezek. 13:5; Mal. 4:1. (3) Terror (Isa. 2:19-21; 13:7-9; Zeph. 1:14-15; Joel 3:16. (4) Repentance (Zeph. 2:2-3; Joel 2:12-17). (5) Restoration (Joel 1:15; 3:9-21; Isa. 1; 11-12; Amos 9:11-15; Hos. 2:18-23; Mic. 4:6-8; Mal. 4:5.


The tribulation period will witness the wrath of Satan in his animosity against Israel (Rev. 12:12-17) and of Satan’s man, the Beast, also known as Antichrist, in his animosity against the saints (Rev. 13:7) but even Satan’s wrath does “not” come close to the intensity of God’s wrath.

The Scriptures plainly teach that the wrath poured out during the Great Tribulation period originates with God and is therefore a time of God’s wrath upon a Christ rejecting a world that is deceived by the devil (See Isaiah 34:1-2; Joel 1:15; Obadiah 15; Revelation 15:1, 7; 16:1; Revelation 19:11-21).

Zephaniah 1:14 “Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A
day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.” (NASU)

The Scriptures plainly reveal that Daniel’s seventieth week, also known as the Great Tribulation period is distinctly the time when God’s wrath and judgment fall upon the earth. This is not wrath from men, nor from Satan, except as God may use these agencies as instruments for the execution of His will, thus the wrath during Daniel’s seventieth week is tribulation from God. This period differs from all preceding tribulation, not only in intensity but also in the kind of tribulation, since it comes from God Himself.

The first great purpose of the tribulation is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9). Many in Israel will accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah during the Tribulation period and along with Old Testament saints, they will enter into the millennial reign of Christ, which is subsequent to the Second Advent of Christ, which terminates the Tribulation period. Our Lord, in His Olivet Discourse makes it clear the tribulation will be the worst period in Israel’s history (Matt. 24:9-26).

Matthew 24:21 “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” (NASU)

The book of Revelation teaches that the Tribulation period is a time when God deals with His covenant people Israel (Rev. 7:4-6; 12:1-2; 17). God’s purpose for Israel in the Tribulation is “crisis evangelism” or in other words, to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. These Jews who turn to Jesus Christ as Savior will enter into the blessings of the Christ’s millennial kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel’s covenants. The good news that the King is about to return will be preached (Matt. 24:14) so that Israel may be turned to their Deliverer.

The book of Revelation teaches that many Jews will believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior (Rev. 7:1-8; Matt. 25:1-13) and also, many Gentiles will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and will be martyred according to Revelation 7:9-17.
The second great purpose of the tribulation is to pour out judgment on unbelieving man and nations.

Revelation 3:11 “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” (NASU)

Joel 3:2 “I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and they have divided up My land.” (NASU)

God judges the nations since they have fallen for the deception of the apostate religious system (Rev. 14:8) and have partaken of the “wine of the wrath of her fornication” and they have followed the false prophet in the worship of the beast (Rev. 13:11-18) and therefore must be judged (Rev. 6:15-17). Since the kingdom to follow is a reign of righteousness, this judgment must be viewed as another step in the progress of God’s program in dealing with sin so that the Messiah may reign. This program of judgment on sinners constitutes the second great purpose of the tribulation period. The divine judgments that will fall on the inhabitants of the earth are designed to lead men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ since God desires all men to be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (NASU)

The divine judgments that will fall on the earth are also designed to destroy Satan’s cosmic system and establish Christ’s millennial rule.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” (NASU)

The Bible also teaches that the church is delivered from the wrath to come during the Great Tribulation period.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. (NASU)

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NASU)

Joel chapters two and three prophesy of events that will take place during Daniel’s Seventieth Week, which refers to a 7-year period that extends from Antichrist’s treaty with Israel after rapture of the church to the Second Advent of Christ and is concerned with the nation of Israel exclusively and will be the worst period in all of Israel’s and the world’s history when Antichrist will rule the world. This 7-year period is divided into two three and a half year periods with the first
three and a half years characterized as a cold war (Mt. 24:6) whereas the last three and a half years are characterized as a hot war (Mt. 24:21-22).

A “week” in the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 refers to 7 prophetic years of 360 days; therefore, the prophecy of the 70 weeks of Daniel refers to 490 prophetic years of Israel’s history.

This prophecy of Daniel’s took place in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, in 538 B.C., when Daniel was between 85 and 90 years of age, 66 years after he had been exiled to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. As a result of his prophetic abilities, Daniel was elevated from the position of a captive slave to ultimately becoming the prime minister of the Babylonian empire, which at that time, ruled the world. However, the Babylonian empire was overthrown by Medo-Persian Empire, which paved the way for the liberation of the Jewish captives who had been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion of Jerusalem in 606 B.C.

Medo-Persian Empire under Darius honored Daniel who served Darius’ successor Cyrus, which takes us to the days that Daniel received the prophecy regarding the 70 prophetic weeks regarding the future of the nation of Israel and Her Messiah. Daniel has now seen a new great world power emerge and is wondering about the future and especially the future of his own people who are in exile in Babylon.

In Daniel 9:1-2, we see Daniel turning to study the Word of God and in particular he reads the prophecy of one of his contemporaries, Jeremiah. The prophecy that Daniel read is found in Jeremiah 25:11-12.

It is the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede. The year is 538 B.C. Daniel is between 85 and 90 years of age. He is old man now. He had been captured back in 606 B.C. when he was about 17. That means that the 70 year period of Israel’s exile is coming to an end. Daniel has now seen a new great world power emerge. He is wondering about the future and especially the future of his own people who are in exile in Babylon.

**Daniel 9:1** In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was {revealed as} the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, {namely} seventy years. (NASB95)

So Daniel turns to study the Word of God and in particular he reads the prophecy of one of his contemporaries, Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 25:11** “This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that
nation, declares the LORD, “for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.” (NASB95)

Therefore, in 538 B.C. Daniel was reading this prophecy and knew that the 70 years of the Babylonian Captivity would end within 2 years in 536 B.C.

In Daniel 9:3-20, Daniel prayed to God asking Him for revelation regarding the future of the Jewish people.

Daniel 9:3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek {Him by} prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, ‘Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. 7 Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day-- to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. 8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God {belong} compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; 10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done {anything} like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. 14 Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day-- we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people {have
become) a reproach to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplications, and for your sake, O Lord, let your face shine on your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline your ear and hear! Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before you on account of any merits of our own, but on account of your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”  

In Daniel 9:20-27, he gets an immediate answer since God sends the angel Gabriel.

Daniel 9:20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in {my} extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 He gave {me} instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell {you} for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision. 24 Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.”

In the Hebrew text, the phrase “seventy weeks” literally reads, “seventy sevens,” which refers to years and “not” days as clearly indicated through a comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

First of all, as we noted earlier, Daniel was reading Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding the Israel’s Babylonian exile, which was to last 70 years. Furthermore, 2 Chronicles 36:21 speaks of Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the Babylonian exile and it indicates quite clearly that the exile would last 70 years.

These 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24 cannot possibly be 70 weeks in the ordinary, literal sense or 490 days for the number has an obvious relation to the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11 and 2 Chronicles 36:21.

Finally, the context clearly indicates that Daniel is referring to years and not days since Daniel 9:2 indicates that Jeremiah’s prophecy of Israel’s Babylonian captivity would be 70 years.

The 70 years of captivity were the specific penalty for violating 70 sabbatic years, which would be 70 sevens, a total of 70 years. Seven days are in one week and every seventh year was a Sabbath rest and seventy sevens brought them to the
year of Jubilee which is noted in Leviticus 25:8-12. The provisions for the land’s Sabbath rest are recorded in detail in Leviticus 25:2-4, 26:32-35, 43 but in those 490 years, Israel had violated exactly 70 sabbatic years so they would go into captivity for 70 years to make amends.

The 490 could not designate days (about 1 1/3 years) for that would not be enough time for the events prophesied by Daniel 9:24-27 to occur and the same is true of 490 weeks of seven days each (i.e. 3,430 days, about 9 ½ years). Also if days were intended one would expect Daniel to have added the phrase “of days” after “70 sevens” for in Daniel 10:2-3 he wrote literally, “three sevens of days”.

Also, it is important to understand that the length of a prophetic year was “not” 365 days but rather 360 days since the solar year, which we live by, of 365.25 days was unknown to the nations in the Old Testament but the Jewish year of biblical times was lunar-solar and had only 360 days. This is borne out in Revelation in John’s vision of the Great Tribulation period since it describes the last 3 ½ years as precisely 1260 days (Rev. 12:6) “a time, times and half a time” where “time” in Hebrew stands for a year of 360 days (verse 14) and “forty-two months” of 30 days each (13:5). Therefore, the “seventy weeks of Daniel” refers to 490 biblical years of 360 days.

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.” (NASB95)

The phrase “your people” indicates that the prophecy deals specifically with the history of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem and not with world history or church history.

“To finish the transgression” refers to the nation of Israel’s apostasy and sin and wandering over the face of the earth will be brought to its consummation within the seventy-sevens or 490 prophetic years at the Second Advent of Christ, on the Day of Atonement.

“To bring an end of sin” refers to bringing sin into judgment at the cross, and extending forgiveness for sins already committed through faith in the coming Redeemer, the Messiah.

“To make an atonement for iniquity” refers to the Cross of Christ as it affects the restoration of the nation of Israel at the Second Advent of Christ (See Zechariah 12:10).

In the Hebrew text, the phrase “to bring in everlasting righteousness” literally means “to cause to bring in everlasting righteousness” and refers to the millennial reign which will be characterized by righteousness.
The phrase “to seal up vision and prophecy” refers to the fact that all that God promised to Israel throughout her history by means of the prophets will be fulfilled during Christ’s millennial reign.

The sixth divine objective “to anoint the Most Holy Place” refers to the dedication of the most holy place in the millennial temple which is described in detail in Ezekiel 41-46.

Daniel 9:25 “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.” (NASB95)


The first three decrees say nothing about the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem itself since the first two decrees pertain to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the third relates to finances for animal sacrifices at the temple but the fourth decree granted the Jews permission to rebuild Jerusalem’s city walls.

The first period of 49 years refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:12-15) and the 62 “sevens” or 434 years extend up to the introduction of Jesus as the Messiah to the nation of Israel (“until the Messiah, the Prince”), which was concluded on the day of our Lord’s Triumphant entry into Jerusalem just before He was crucified (“cut off”).

Daniel 9:26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.” (NASB95)

The statement “after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off” refers to the crucifixion of Christ. “The people” refers to the Romans who under the general Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. “The prince who is to come” refers to the Antichrist who will make a seven year treaty with Israel to begin Daniel’s seventieth week. Three and a half years into the treaty, he will break and desecrate the rebuilt Jewish temple and declare himself world-ruler and God and will demand to be worshipped as God.

So we can see that the first seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks that followed it ran consecutively with no time between them and totaled 483 years and extended from March 5, 444 B.C to March 30, 33 A.D.

In order to understand how 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 can equal 483 years, we must understand that the Jewish calendar had 360 days per year, thus 483 years times...
360 days equals 173,880 days. The Gregorian Calendar contains 365 days a year and under this 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 would be 476 years since only one year expired between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. A total of 476 years divided by four (a leap year every four years) gives 119 additional days but three days must be subtracted from 119 because centennial years are not leap years, though every 400th year is a leap year. Thus, 476 years times 365 days equals 173,740 days and if we add 116 days in leap years and 24 days (March 5-30), we have 173,880 days.

The church age takes place between Daniel 9:26 and 27 and was a “mystery” (Eph. 3:9) meaning it was not known to Old Testament prophets such as Daniel.

God has temporarily set aside Israel because of her rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah (Rom. 9-11) in order to form the church and to fulfill the “times of the Gentiles,” which we will note in this study of the day of the Lord.

So therefore, the last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy have yet to be fulfilled but will be fulfilled after the rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Daniel 9:27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (NASB95)

The statement “he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week” refers to antichrist making a covenant with Israel during the Daniel’s seventieth week (See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

“But in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate,” refers to the antichrist stopping the Levitical sacrifices that will be reestablished in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the departure comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (NASB95)

The phrase “even until a complete destruction, one (Antichrist) that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” refers to the destruction of antichrist at the Second Advent of Christ when he will be thrown into the lake of fire (See Revelation 19:20; Daniel 7:11, 26).

Therefore, we can see that the seventy weeks of Daniel of 490 prophetic years are divided into three segments: (1) 7 “sevens” (49 years): The decree of Artaxerxes in 444 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8) to the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25). (2) 62 “sevens” (434 years): The completion of the
rebuilding of Jerusalem to Christ’s Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and crucifixion in 33 A.D. (Dan. 9:25-26) (3) 1 “seven” (7 years): Tribulation period (Dan. 9:27).

As we will develop later in this article, early in the first half of the Tribulation a ten-nation federation will be arrayed in the west with headquarters at Rome and is designated in Scripture “ten horns” in Daniel 7:7-8, 23-24, Revelation 13:1-10, and 17:8-10, and is sometimes called the Revived Roman Empire. The ruler of this federation is the Antichrist, the King of the West, who is referred to in Scripture as “the beast” (Rev. 13:1-2), the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8), the “prince that will come” (Dan. 9:26-27), the “man of lawlessness” (2 Th. 2:3-10), and the “scarlet beast” (Rev. 17:3).

The agreement between Israel and Antichrist stipulates that he will rush to the aid of Israel in the event of an enemy attack (Dan. 9:27; cf., 11:38-39). Michael and the elect angels will cast Satan out of heaven to the earth during the midway point of Daniel’s seventieth week (Rev. 12:1-3) and will instigate Russia to attack Israel but God will destroy Russia (Joel 2:20; Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 11:40). Following the destruction of the Russian armies, the cold war comes to an end because halfway through the Tribulation, while the treaty is still in force, the Antichrist will issue a new decree stating that all sacrifices in the Temple shall cease!

In their place, a statue of the Antichrist called the “abomination of desolation,” (Dan. 12:11) will be set up in the Most High Place for mandatory worship (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; cf., Rev. 13:15). This will mark the worst persecution in the history of Israel and will begin the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, which coincides with the war of Armageddon. Jewish believers in the Tribulation who are knowledgeable of the Word of God will obey the Lord’s warning and flee (Mt. 24:15-20; cf., Dan. 11:41; Rev. 12:6) and wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver them at His 2nd Advent.

The Second Advent of Christ terminates Daniel’s seventieth week, aka, the Tribulation and at that time, the Lord will bodily land in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives (See Zechariah 14:4).

At His Second Advent, the Lord Jesus Christ will destroy the Tributional armies, have Antichrist and the False Prophet thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:11-19), will imprison Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3) and will establish His millennial reign on planet earth (Rev. 20:4-6).

The events that will take place during Daniel’s seventieth week are staggering and mind boggling. The following is a list of events that will take place during the first of the Tribulation: (1) The Rise of the Ten Nation Confederacy called the Revived Roman Empire at the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 2: 7). (2) Antichrist rises to power as the King of the Western Confederacy in Europe (Dan. 7:20, 24; 9:27; Rev. 13:1-10). (3) The formulation of a false religious system under the false prophet at the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week (Rev. 13:11-
18). (4) Antichrist makes a 7-year covenant with Israel to protect her (Dan. 9:24-27; 1st seal Rev. 6:1-2). (5) Israel living in peace in the land (Ezek. 38:8). (6) Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem and sacrifices instituted (Rev. 11:1-2; 2 Th. 2:4). (7) World-wide apostate church dominates (Rev. 17). (8) The pouring out of the judgments under the seals (Rev. 6). (9) 144,000 Born-again Jews evangelize Israel and the world (Rev. 7:1-8).

The following is a list of events in the middle of the Tribulation: (1) Satan is expelled from heaven by Michael and the elect angels and cast down to earth (Rev. 12:1-17). (2) Gog and her allies invade Israel from the north (Joel 2:20; Ezek. 38-39). (3) Gog and her allies are destroyed by God (Ezek. 38:17-23).

The following are the events during the second half of Tribulation: (1) Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and puts an end to sacrifices in temple and declares himself as God (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:4). (2) Antichrist becomes world ruler as a result of the power vacuum in the world caused by the destruction of Russia’s military (Rev. 6:1-2; 13:5, 7; 17:12-13). (3) War, famine and death (second, third and fourth seals, Rev. 6:3-8). (4) Martyrdom of both Jewish and Gentile believers who don’t receive mark of the Beast (fifth seal, Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-14; Mt. 24:9). (5) Jerusalem overrun by Gentile armies (Rev. 11:2; Lk. 21:24). (6) Two Witnesses (Moses and Elijah) killed and raised from the dead (Rev. 11). (7) Image of Antichrist worshipped by the world (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15; 2 Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15). (8) Worldwide deception by false prophets and Antichrist (Mt. 24:11; 2 Th. 2:9-11). (9) Gospel proclaimed worldwide (Mt. 24:14). (10) Worldwide disasters from divine wrath (6th seal, Rev. 6:12-17). (11) Worldwide persecution of Israel (Jer. 30:5-7; Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21-22). (12) Trumpet Judgments (Rev. 8-9, 11). (13) Bowl Judgments (Rev. 16). (14) Antichrist destroys the worldwide apostate church (Rev. 17:16-18).


Joel chapters two and three prophesy of events that will not only take place during Daniel’s Seventieth Week but also it prophesies of the millennial reign of Christ. The day of the Lord is typified in the book of Joel by the devastating locust plague which inflicts enormous economic loss upon the nation of Israel. This plague points to an even greater destruction during Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The
disaster that came upon the nation of Israel as a result of a severe locust plague in Joel 1:2-20 signaled an even worse calamity that would come in the nation’s future, the day of the Lord and in particular the Great Tribulation period that will begin the day of the Lord.

Joel uses a recent drought and locust plague as an object lesson to warn of a future invasion of Israel in the Day of the Lord. If the nation will change their attitude toward Jesus Christ and accept Him as Savior, God will restore His relationship with Israel and bless her.

In chapter one, the prophet Joel speaks of a locust plague that hit Israel and devastated her economy. He then uses this locust plague in succeeding chapters to describe the armies of the Tribulation period that will invade the land of the Israel and devastate her just as the locust did in the days of Joel.

Chapter two is a description of invading human armies of the Tribulation period prefigured by the Assyrian invasion and does not refer to a literal locust plague, which is clearly indicated by several passages in the book of Joel (2:2, 20). In Israel, locusts usually come from the south and armies from the north.

Chapter two is a description of the invasion by a northern army (Joel 2:20). Ezekiel 38-39 also describes an invasion of the Israel in the latter days from the north of her. This passage also describes a complete destruction of this invasion on the mountains of Israel. It is clear from the chronology in Joel and other passages of Scripture that the armies of the north in Russia are destroyed in a separate distinct time period, prior to the destruction of the world’s armies, which will then be followed by the Millennium.

**Daniel’s Seventieth Week**

- **Antichrist’s Treaty With Israel**
- **Satan’s Expulsion from Heaven**
- **Second Advent of Christ**

**Rapture**

- **Pentecost**

**Church Age**

**Daniel’s 70th Week-Seven Years**

- **Russian Led Invasion of Israel**
- **Antichrist Breaks Treaty**
- **3 ½ Years**
- **3 ½ Years**

Purpose

The purpose of the book of Joel is to warn the nation of Israel about a coming day in which God would judge His people and the nations. In Joel’s day, there was the predication of a literal locust plague followed by invasion by Assyria from the north. Ultimately during the latter days, there will be an invasion again from the north, which Ezekiel 38-39 indicate will be a Russian led invasion. The warning is designed to motivate the Israelites to repent.

Ezekiel 38:1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 “Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him 3 and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.’” (NASB95)

The name “Gog” is the proper noun gogh, which is a title for a ruler like Caesar or Pharaoh and means, “the man on top,” i.e. the dictator. The name “Magog” is the proper noun maghogh, which means, “land of Gog.” Magog was the second son of Japheth according to Genesis 10:2.

His descendants inhabited exclusively the region of the Caucasus and of northern Armenia. It is interesting that the name “Caucasus” means, “Gog’s fort.” Josephus says that Magog “founded those that from him were named Magogites but who by the Greeks were called Scythians.”

The Scythians themselves have a tradition that their ancestors originally came forth from Armenia. This agrees with the Scriptures, which places the immediate descendants of Noah in Armenia.

Historians agree that the Magogites were divided into two distinct races: (1) Japhetic or European (2) Turanian or Asiatic.

The Japhetic race comprised those whom the Greeks and Romans called Sarmatians, but who in modern times are called Slavs or Russians. It is interesting to note Jewish commentaries identify Magog as Russia. Also, the Great Wall of China in the Arabic language means, “the wall of Al Magog” because the Great Wall was built to keep out the invading armies from Russia.

The descendants of “Magog” include: Russians, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Finns, Siberians, Yugoslavians, Croatians, Bosnians, Serbians, Slovenians, Slovakians, Bulgarians, Poles, and Czechs. Therefore, “Magog” signifies the nation and “Gog” is the title of the ruler of that nation.

Ezekiel 38:2-3 states that Gog, from the land of Magog is the leader of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. “Prince” is the noun nasi, which means, “exalted one” and denotes Gog is the leader of a particular nation. “Rosh” is the proper noun ro’sh, which means, “first, head, chief.”

The well-known nineteenth century Hebrew lexicographer Gesenius says, “Rosh is the proper name of a northern nation…probably equated with the Russians.” But this linguistic evidence is uncertain and presumptive. Therefore, we cannot base our interpretation here that Gog is the prince of Russia. But the geographical and contextual evidence is overwhelmingly in favor that the “Rosh” was indeed located in Russia.

The geographic and contextual evidence clearly indicates that “Rosh” is Russia since it is said to be located extreme north of Israel. Remember, Ezekiel 38:6, 15 and 39:2 clearly state that these invading armies are coming from the extreme north of Israel.

If one takes any map of the world and draws a line north of the land of Israel he will inevitably come to the nation Russia. As soon as the line is drawn to the far north beyond Asia Minor and the Black Sea it is in Russia and continues to be in Russia for many hundreds of miles all the way to the Arctic Circle. Russia today spreads east and west some 6,000 miles, and one cannot escape Russia if he goes north of the Holy Land.

On the basis of geography alone, it seems quite clear that the only nation which could possibly be referred to as coming from the far north would be the nation Russia. The suggestion that the nation is ancient Assyria revived is rendered improbable by the geographic description.

The ethnic evidence links the prince of Rosh with Meshech and Tubal who like Magog were sons of Japheth according to Genesis 10:2. This is repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:5. These Japhethites (Meshech and Tubal) migrated from Asia and later from Asia Minor to the north beyond the Black Sea, the Taurus Mountains and the Caspian Sea.

The name “Meshech” is the proper noun meshekh, which means, “led along.” The name “Tubal” is the proper noun tuval, which means, “you shall be led.” The
meanings of these two proper nouns coincide with the Lord’s intention to put hooks into the jaws of Gog, the leader of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. The descendants of “Meshech” include Muscovites, Lithuanians, Romanians whereas the descendants of “Tubal” include Georgians and Albanians.

Some expositors believe that “Meshech” refers to the city of Moscow and “Tubal” to the city of Tobolsk but this is not the case since Ezekiel was speaking of countries and not cities. Ezekiel had historical places in mind when he refers to “Meshech” and “Tubal.”

Meshech and Tubal are the Mushki and Tabali of the Assyrian monuments (Ezek. 27:13), in the ninth century B.C. located northeast of Cilicia in Asia Minor. By the time of Herodotus they had moved northward to the mountainous region of the Black Sea.

Geographic evidence indicates that the only nation in the territory to the extreme north of Israel and in fact extending to the Artic circle is Russia! Magog’s land was located in what is called today, the Caucasus and the adjoining steppes. These three, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal were called by the ancients, Scythians. They roamed as nomads in the country around and north of the Black (located directly north of Turkey and along the eastern border of Russia) and Caspian Seas (located directly north of Tehran, Iran and along southern border of Russia) and were known as wild barbarians.

Josephus (Ant. 1.6.1) and Jerome, identify the Magog of Ezek 38:2Ezek 39:1,6, the land of which Gog was prince, with the land of the Scythians, who in Ezekiel’s time inhabited the region between the Caspian and Black seas.

The Scythians of the time of Herodotus and Ezekiel are believed to have been a Japhetic race. They were backward in civilization so that their name became proverbial for wildness or barbarity much as the Greeks used the epithet “barbarian” (cf. Col 3:11). Thus, Meshech and Tubal were located in area where several Russian Republics are located, namely Chechnya, Stavropol, Krasnodar, Dagestan, and Rostov as well as the country of Georgia located south of these Russian Republics and the Ukraine.

Therefore, we can conclude that in Ezekiel 38:1-3, the name “Gog” is the title of the ruler and “Magog” signifies the land, which is composed of three parts, “Rosh, Meshech and Tubal,” all of which were located in an area that is now known as Russia.

Joel teaches that the Lord is not only sovereign over Israel but over the nations of the earth. The term “sovereignty” connotes a situation in which a person, from his innate dignity, exercises supreme power, with no areas of his province outside his jurisdiction. As applied to God, the term “sovereignty” indicates His complete power over all of creation, so that He exercises His will absolutely, without any necessary conditioning by a finite will or wills.
Isaiah 40:15 “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.” (NASB95)

Isaiah 40:17 “All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.” (NASB95)

Text

There are no major textual difficulties with the book of Joel with the exception of 2:23. The NET commenting this writes, “Normally the Hebrew word הַמּוֹרֶה (hammoreh) means ‘the teacher,’ but here and in Ps 84:7 it refers to ‘early rains.’ Elsewhere the word for ‘early rains’ is יָוֶר (yoreh). The phrase here הַמּוֹרֶה לִצְדָּקָה (hammoreh litsdaqah) is similar to the expression ‘teacher of righteousness’ (Heb., מ֤וֹרֶה מָצְדָּקֶה , moreh hatsdeq) found in the Dead Sea Scrolls referring to a particular charismatic leader, although the Qumran community seems not to have invoked this text in support of that notion.”4

Stuart writes “MT המורה ‘the teacher’ is supported by Tg. Vg σ and was perhaps a proof text for the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran. This reading is surely secondary, however, to G (τὰ βρώματα ‘the food’), supported by Syr. and L. The original was probably either המורה or the moreh מָאתָל, with representing a dittographic replacement.”5

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Outline

I. Introduction (1:1)
II. Literal Locust Plague (1:2-20)
   A. Call to Mourn (1:5-13)
      1. Call for drunks to mourn (1:5-7).
      2. Call for the land to mourn (1:8-10).
      3. Call for the farmers to mourn (1:11-12).
      4. Call for the priests to mourn (1:13).
   C. Call for Repentance (1:14).
   D. The immanency of the day of the Lord (1:15-20).
      1. Starvation among the people and animals (1:15-18).
      2. The land is devastated (1:19-20).
   A. The immanency of the day of the Lord (2:1).
   B. Description the day of the Lord (2:2).
   C. Destruction from the army sent by the Lord (2:3-5).
   D. The intensity of the invasion of the army (2:6-11).
   E. Call to inward and not outward repentance (2:12-17).
   F. Promise of Restoration (2:18-19).
   G. Lord Promises to Destroy Northern Army (2:20).
   H. Promise of Agricultural Blessing (2:21-27).
IV. Promise of Future Glory (2:28-3:21).
   A. Promise of the Spirit (2:28-29).
   B. Promise of Future Deliverance (2:30-32).
   D. Promise of Future Restoration (Millennial reign) (3:17-21).