I. THE PROPHET

A. Joel was the son of Pethuel.
   1. This is all he told about himself.
   2. He did not tell under what king he prophesied.
   3. We are left to inferences in the text.

B. Joel was a Judean prophet.
   1. He exhorted the priests, 1:13-14.
   3. He addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 2:23.
   4. He saw Jerusalem surrounded, 2:9
   5. The temple was before him, 1:9.
      a. Joel's close association with the temple has caused many scholars to view him as a cultic prophet.
      b. He is very familiar with the cultic rituals, etc., but whether these represent his true orientation or his derivation of these forms for his own purposes scholars have not been able to decide satisfactorily.

II. OCCASION

A. A plague of locusts of unparalleled magnitude furnishes the occasion of Joel's prophecy. These locusts had:
   1. Destroyed vineyards, 1:7
   2. Stripped bark from the trees, 1:7
   3. Left the fields barren, 1:10
   4. Van-Lennep describes the ability of locusts to destroy:

   The young locusts . . . rapidly attain the size of the common grasshopper and proceed in one and the same direction, first crawling and at a later period leaping, as they go, devouring every green thing that lies in their path. They advance more slowly than a devouring fire, but the ravages they commit are scarcely inferior or less to be dreaded. Fields of standing
wheat and barley, vineyards, mulberry orchards, and groves of olive, fig, and other trees are in a few hours deprived of every green blade and leaf; the very bark being often destroyed. Their voracity is such that, in the neighborhood of Broosa, in the year 1856, an infant, having been left asleep in its cradle under some shady trees was found not long after partly devoured by the locusts. The ground over which their devastating hordes have passed at once assumes an appearance of sterility and dearth. Well did the Romans call them "the burners of the land," which is the literal meaning of our word "locust." (cited by Deane, Pulpit, 13:iii-iv).

B. Accompanying this plague was a severe drought.

1. Seeds were shriveling under the clods, 1:17
2. Animals had no pasture, they had dried up, 1:18

C. In these circumstances, Joel called the people to repentance, 2:15-17

1. The locust army is a warning to the people.
2. They are forerunners of a greater judgment.
3. If they repent the "day of Yhwh" will turn to blessing.

D. The people were **lukewarm** and **indifferent**.

1. There was no idolatry, 2:12-13.
2. There are none of the blatant sins for which other prophets condemned the people (Alcorn, Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, 1:934).

E. Three other facts in addition to absence of idolatry.

1. The temple was standing, 1:9
2. The walls of the city were standing, 2:9
3. There was no king, 1:14; 2:16, 17.

   a. Joel appeals to the elders and inhabitants, 1:14.
   b. He appeals to the children, 1:3.
   c. He appeals to the priests and ministers, 2:16, 17.
   d. But, he does not mention a king.

III. **DATE.**
A. The only external data which is suggestive in any way is that of the book's position in the Hebrew text and the LXX.

1. According to Wolff (Joel, 3):
   a. The LXX, which shows a pronounced interest in chronology (Ruth next to Judges; Ezra and Nehemiah after Chronicles) places Joel (Obadiah and Jonah) in a later position.
   b. "Evidently the G tradition knew of no chronology for Joel which contradicted this rearrangement."
   c. But note, this is a grouping according to whether or not a prophet dated his prophecies according to a king's reign. The authors of the LXX were working with different presuppositions than what Wolff proposes.

2. Further, the Hebrew text offers evidence for an early date:
   a. "... the position of Joel in the Hebrew canonical order of the Minor prophets is in itself suggestive; Jewish tradition supports an early date, although Ibn Ezra considered that there was 'no way of knowing" Joel's period" (Allen, Joel, 19).
   b. Allen argues (Joel, 21) that the preexilic position is weak because "The Hebrew position is explained on literary grounds as due to the similarities between Amos 1:2; 9:13, and Joel 3:16, 18 respectively, and to the mention of Tyre, the Philistines, and Edom in both books."

(1) This is a manipulation of the data.

(2) We could just as easily argue that the placing of Amos after Joel presupposes Amos' dependance on Joel in the passages and names.

B. Any date assigned must make use of the 4 facts mentioned above

1. No king, no idolatry, temple and city walls standing, as well as certain other internal facts.
2. Joel mentions Phoenicians and Philistines (3:4) and the Edomites and Egyptians (3:19).

3. Some scholars attempt to account for these facts by dating Joel after the Babylonian Captivity, 400 B.C.

4. Others have attempted to account for these facts by dating Joel during the minority of King Joash. This would make him the earliest classical prophet.

5. Other alternatives which lie somewhere between these two extremes have also been put forward.

C. The various dates are as follows.

1. 870-860 B.C. — K. A. Credner (1831) was the first to advocate this date. Many 19th century scholars (Ewald, Pusey, Keil, and von Orelli) espoused this position.

   a. The background for this view is as follows.


         (a) Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, began to reign in Judah in 5th year of Joram, king of Israel (2 Kgs 8:16).

         (b) He married Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel & Ahab (2 Kgs 8:18).

         (c) Ahaziah was born to this union, 2 Kgs 8:26-27.

         (d) He reigned one year before Jehu killed him, 2 Kgs 9:27-8

      (2) God commanded this of Jehu (2 Chr 22:7-12) though he did it for the wrong reasons

   b. Athaliah, upon the death of her son, attempted to murder all her grandsons, and made herself queen (2 Kgs 11:1).
c. But her granddaughter, Hosheba, and wife of the high priest, Jehoiada, hid her younger brother, Joash, 6 yrs in the temple, 2 Kgs 11:2-3.

d. 6 yrs later Jehoiada brought Joash out of hiding, made him the rightful king, and executed Athaliah, 2 Kgs 11:17-18.

e. 2 Kgs 12:2-3: And Jehoash did that which was right in the eyes of Yhwh all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

   (1) All of Baal's idols were destroyed, 2 Kgs 11:18.
   (2) The temple was repaired, 2 Kgs 12:4-15; 2 Chr 24:7
   (3) Priests started receiving payment, 2 Kgs 12:16.
   (4) Jehoiada died and Joash turned to idolatry, 2 Chr 24:15-18.
   (5) Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, preached against this and was murdered, 2 Chr 24:20-22.

f. One can see:

   (1) Temple was standing — Jehoiada & Joash repaired it
   (2) Walls of Jerusalem were standing.
   (3) The idolatry of Baal was destroyed

   (a) Idols were worshiped by the masses, 2 Kgs 11:2-3
   (b) Jehoiada's restoration was only outward.
   (c) It affected only a few

   (4) God's sending of the locusts plague so that a complete restoration could be made, 2:13.

   (5) There was no king

   (a) Joash was king in name
   (b) Was not considered an adult until about age 16
   (c) Jehoiada was running the government.

5
(1) The position in the Hebrew Bible

(2) Statement relative to foreign nations

(a) **Mentions:** Phoenicians & Philistines (3:4); Edomites & Egyptians (3:19). These nations exercised varying degrees of association with Israel during her preexilic history.

(b) **Does not mention:** Syrian invasion in last part of Joash's reign (2 Chr 22:22-24); Assyrians & Babylonians. If Joel is to be dated late, one would suppose that he would have mentioned these nations.

h. To summarize (cf. Allen, Joel, 19-20; Dean, Pulpit, vii-viii & x-xi):

(1) The references to Egypt and Edom in 3:17, 19 have reference to Shishak's attack on Jerusalem in Rehoboam's reign (1 K. 14:25f.)

(2) The revolt of Edom occurred in the reign of Jehoram (2 K. 8:20-22).

(3) The non-mention of such national enemies of Judah as Syria, Assyria, or Babylon are explained as follows:

(a) Syria did not threaten Judah till later in Joash's reign

(b) Assyria and Babylon belong to the later reign of Jehoram (2 Chr. 21:16ff.), when the king's sons and wives were seized

(c) The fact that a king is not mentioned in the course of Joel's oracles is explained by reference to the minority of Joash

(d) So Joel appeals to the priests are linked with the control of the high priest Jehoiada while Joash was minor (Allen).
(4) Under the three kings preceding Joash, idolatry was prevalent

(a) The pure worship established by Jehoiada and Joash evaporated once Jehoiada died

(b) So Joel's prophecy must be set in the earlier part of Joash's reign, when the young king was under tutelage.

(c) This would account for his not being mentioned amongst the various classes whom the prophet summons to penitence in ch. i and ii. (Dean)

(5) There exists not date that is without difficulties, but the date of this minority of Joash seems to fit best

2. The majority of scholars (usually liberal) have used this same data, as well as certain linguistic arguments, to argue for a postexilic date (400 B.C. and the following decades).

a. W. Vatke (Die Religion des AT nach den kanonischen Büchern [1835], 462) was the first to argue for this date.

(1) Judah is called Israel in 2:27, 3:2 and also in 3:16, suggesting a date after 721 B.C. when the kingdom of Israel fell

(a) NRS Joel 2:27 You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

(b) NRS Joel 3:2 I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations. They have divided my land,
(c) **NRS Joel 3:16** The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

(2) The great enemies of Judah are absent from the book indicating Joel belongs after the captivity and return.

(3) The Persians would not be mentioned since during this time Judah was on friendly terms with them.

(4) The historical allusions in 3:2ff. likely refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and the ensuing exile.

(5) The positive emphasis on the cult contrasts with the attitude of the preexilic prophets.

(6) The absence of the king and the dominance of the priesthood point to a postexilic date.

(7) That the whole community could be summoned to the temple indicates the post-exile when the population was reduced.

(8) The allusions to cereal offering and libation in 1:9, 13; 2:14 indicate the postexilic offering of the דָּמִי, tāmid, or daily temple offering.

(a) **NRS Joel 1:9** The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD.

(b) **NRS Joel 1:13** Put on sackcloth and lament, you priests; wail, you ministers of the altar. Come, pass the night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God! **Grain offering and drink offering** are withheld from the house of your God.

(c) **NRS Joel 2:14** Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a **grain offering and a drink offering** for the LORD, your
God?

(9) The reference to the Greeks as recipients of Judean slaves in 3:6 suggests the Persian position as a world power in later times — *(NRS)* Joel 3:6 You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, removing them far from their own border

(10) The destruction of Sidon in 345 B.C. indicates a date earlier than this for 3:4 — *(NRS)* Joel 3:4 ¶ What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will turn your deeds back upon your own heads swiftly and speedily.

b. The linguistic data favor the postexilic period

(1) For instance, "ministers of Yahweh, מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ, מֶלֶךְ yhwh, in 1:9 is characteristic of postexilic literature.

(2) Moreover, there are a host of literary allusions, e.g., to Isa. 13:6 (1:15), Ezek. 30:2ff. (1:15), Zeph. 1:14f. (2:1f.), and to Mal. 3:2; 4:5 (2:11, 31). Obad. 17, which is best taken as postexilc, is explicitly quoted in 3:17. (Allen, Joel, 20-21.

3. Between these two extremes are several scholars who have argued for a late preexilic date.

a. **A. S. Kapelrud** dated the book to c. 600 B.C., during the reign of Zedekiah.

(1) He relates the references of the Philistines to the hostility found in Jeremiah 47:4 — *(NRS)* Jeremiah 47:4 because of the day that is coming to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper that remains. For the LORD is destroying the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor

(2) The mention of Greeks refers to Ionians which are known to have engaged in preexilic trading practices with Mesopotamia.
(3) Joel's call to repentance in order to avert greater danger is paralleled by Isa 1:18-20 and Amos 4:6-12.

(4) The absence of a reference to a king in chs 1 and 2 is because the prophet did not refer to classes of people.

(5) Similarly, neither Isa 3:1-3 nor Mic 3:9-12 have a royal reference.

(6) The similarity between Zeph 1:15 and Joel 2:2 reflects the contemporaneity of the two prophets.

b. Carl A. Keller dated the book between 630 and 600 B.C.

(1) 3:19 refers to the Egyptian intervention in Palestine during that time.

(2) 3:2 refers to the downfall of the northern kingdom. ("Israel").

(3) Jer 47:4 and Ezek 28:20-24 refer to the hostility between the late preexilic period.

(4) Further it is feasible that the Greeks would be referred to in the late 7th century.

(5) Joel speaks the language of his time and reflects the viewpoint of his contemporaries (Zephaniah, Nahum, Obadiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel).

c. Wilhelm Rudolph dates Joel at 597 and 587 B.C.

(1) The use of "Israel" can only refer to Judah since the northern kingdom has long since fallen.

(2) 3:2, 3, 17 refer to the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 597.

(3) The fact that the temple is mentioned shows that 587 is not in view.
(4) 3:19 refers to Jews living in Egypt and Edom prior to 597 who were treated badly (Jer 40:11; 44:1), or to simple commercial transactions.

(a) There are Greek contacts in 7th and 6th centuries. Joel does not mention a king just as Isaiah 1-5 does not mention one.

(b) Further, since this is essentially an eschatological view, there was no reason for the prophet to refer to political issues.

(c) Modern scholars have demonstrated the validity of pro-cultic prophets in the preexilic period.

4. Nearly all the proposals have problems

a. The evidence marshaled and the arguments put forth leaves the reader with the clear impression of indecisiveness

b. They therefore are weak.

D. All-in-all, the 9th century date, about 830 B.C., during the minority of Joash seems to be the best candidate.

IV. THEME--GENERAL STATEMENT--MESSAGE--PURPOSE OF JOEL

A. Theme: The Lord has called the people to repentance and holiness via natural judgments (2:12-14) so that He can fulfill his covenant promise to redeem them immediately (2:18-27) and spiritually (2:28-3:21) (Butler, 153).

B. General Statement: The prophecy of Joel extends from his own day to the end of time (1:4) (Pusey, 146).

C. Message: The day is coming when everyone will receive his just reward.

D. Purpose: to call God's people to repentance and to show the great judgment coming upon the nations who oppress the people of God (Pledge, 212-13).

E. All of these can be summed up in Joel's name, "Yhwh is God."
V. DIVISION OF THE BOOK

A. The book can be divided two ways.

1. According to subject matter
   a. Joel's day, 1:1-2:27
   b. The future, 2:28-3:21

2. According to theme
   a. Sin and punishment, 1:1-2:17
   b. Repentance and blessing and judgment, 2:18-3:21

VI. PROPHETS WHO RELATE TO JOEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Bible Reference</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joel 1:15</strong></td>
<td>Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isaiah 13:6</strong></td>
<td>Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joel 2:2</strong></td>
<td>a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zephaniah 1:15</strong></td>
<td>That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joel 2:3</strong></td>
<td>Fire devours in front of them, and behind them a flame burns. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, but after them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isaiah 51:3</strong></td>
<td>For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ezekiel 36:35</strong></td>
<td>And they will say, &quot;This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isaiah 13:10</strong></td>
<td>For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joel 2:10</strong></td>
<td>The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Isaiah 13:10</strong></td>
<td>For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joel 2:32</strong></td>
<td>Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obadiah 17</strong></td>
<td>But on Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall take possession of those who dispossessed them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NRS Joel 3:10</strong></td>
<td><strong>NRS Isaiah 2:4</strong></td>
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<td>Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weakling say, &quot;I am a warrior.&quot;</td>
<td>He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; 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.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>NRS Joel 3:16</strong></th>
<th><strong>NRS Amos 1:2</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.</td>
<td>And he said: The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds wither, and the top of Carmel dries up.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>NRS Joel 3:17</strong></th>
<th><strong>NRS Ezekiel 36:11</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So you shall know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it.</td>
<td>And I will multiply human beings and animals upon you. They shall increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>NRS Joel 3:18</strong></th>
<th><strong>NRS Amos 9:13</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>In that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Wadi Shittim.</td>
<td>The time is surely coming, says the LORD, when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.</td>
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**VII. THE DAY OF THE LORD**

A. "The day of the Lord" (יָהֹוָה יְהוָעָד) is introduced first by Joel.

1. **1:15: Alas for the day! For the day of Yhwh is at hand; and as**
destruction from the almighty shall it come.

2. **2:1**: Blow the trumpet in zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the **day of Yhwh** comes, for it is close at hand.

3. **2:11**: And Yhwh utters his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executes his word; for the **day of Yhwh** is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

4. **2:31 (Heb 3:4)**: The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the **great and terrible day of Yhwh** comes.

B. Joel moves from "a day of Yhwh" to "the day of Yhwh" — the judgment of all mankind.

1. The fact that Joel's prophecy moves in this way makes it an excellent "introduction" to predictive prophecy. He gives an "overview" of what other prophets' messages elaborated.

2. Joel did not just identify the "day of the Lord" with the locust plague, but argued that it typified the approach of the great day of judgment (Keil, 922-3).

C. Other prophets made use of this theme: Amos 5:18ff; Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9; Zeph 1:14ff; Jer 46:10; Ezek 30:2; Obad 15; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:5.

D. The "day of Yhwh" seems to be:

1. days of doom and days of deliverance
2. days of natural calamities, captivity, and oppression
3. days in which God uses the universe to carry out judgments
   a. For the faithful--a day of deliverance
   b. For others--a day of punishment

4. Each "day of Yhwh" points to "the day of Yhwh"—the judgment

VIII. **JOEL AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

1. Acts 2 is the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel 2
2. To this all scholars agree
3. But some maintain that Joel's prophecy encompasses all of the gospel age.
4. Others that it will be fulfilled only in the millennium. Clearly, this view is false.

B. Romans 10:13 quotes Joel 2:32
   1. Serves as a preface to stating the plan of salvation
   2. Paul reasons
      a. Whoever calls on God will be saved, Rom 10:13--as Joel prophesied
      b. But one cannot call if he has not believed, 10:14
      c. One cannot believe unless he has heard, 10:14
      d. One cannot hear unless a preacher is sent, 10:14-15
      e. Romans 10:17 is the conclusion to Joel 2:32

IX. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM JOEL.

A. The people of Judah in his day were so much like Christians today, meaning that Joel's message warns Christians who are beginning to drift spiritually that God's blessings can be revived in their lives, and that they can anticipate even further blessings in the days to come.

B. The method of God's salvation is judgment and redemption
   1. God demonstrates over and over in the historic judgments and redemptions of national Israel and prophesied as coming upon a new covenant people in the last days time and time again through the O.T. prophets.
   2. Our salvation awaits only the consummation of final redemption and final judgment (Heb. 9:28).
   3. The next time Christ comes it will not be to re-institute the Jewish sacrifices and temple or to offer another opportunity for the Jews to be
saved.

a. He has dealt with sin once for all.

b. Each judgment/redemption experience of national Israel foreshadowed and predicted that final and complete judgment/redemption experience realized in Jesus Christ's 1st appearance and the consummation at his 2nd

C. Wolff (Joel, 15) lists some 7 astute observations regarding the lessons of Joel.

1. Israel is prepared for the future of Christ.

2. Joel prefigured Jesus' coming in which:
   a. God drew/draws all people from all nations into the deliverance on Mount Zion (the church)
   b. This deliverance on Mount Zion takes place in the activity of the spirit of the Christ who was crucified and raised again in Jerusalem

3. When the church begins to drift into legalism, as did Israel, she is in need of the same type of awakening as Israel received — this is scary

4. Present threats to the proper worship of God should remind Christians that they are dealing with threats to the very existence of the church

5. The reason for renewal and deliverance is the transformation of the old and the new people of God in all of its members through the spirit of God himself (3:1-5)."

6. We must never forget that salvation history and world history (the history of God's people and that of the world of nations) are correlated — the salvation of the entire world is involved

7. "Even after Christ, a deep, momentous chasm cleaves the world. It corresponds to the one which rent ancient Jerusalem at the time of Joel's proclamation: Would the prophet's call be perceived as God's word? Would the coming Lord be invoked and expected through a reorientation of life in its totality towards his anticipated compassion?"
8. Wolff then closes with this thought provoking observation: "I hear the 'learned prophet' Joel say in a world changed since Jesus of Nazareth: Let the catastrophic threats to the present and the future move you to a total reorientation towards the attested and coming compassion of God!"