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Joel: His Message Is for Us

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Abstract: This article discusses the prophet Joel.



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JOEL

His Message Is for Us

Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

—Joel 1: 15.

One speech alone has been preserved, one message only from the Prophet Joel. It tells of his vision of the day of destiny when all nations shall be gathered in the "valley of decision." It promises that ere that day comes, the Spirit of the Lord shall be poured out upon all flesh. It indicates that some people will be guided by that Spirit to turn unto the LORD and find deliverance, while others will oppose it and go down to doom and destruction. It tells of the peaceful kingdom to come at last upon this earth.

Who Joel was, where he taught, or what he prophesied besides this, we do not know. That he lived in the crisis days of Israel, like the other Old Testament prophets, is apparent. But we do know that his message is significant for us. We have a warning from the angelic herald of our dispensation, who spoke to young Joseph Smith in 1823. Joseph tells us that the angel Moroni “. . . quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this *was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. . .*”¹

The essence of the message of the prophecy of Joel is found in the passage that he quoted:

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.*²

Who are the people of this “remnant” in Zion and Jerusalem? They are they who are to be gathered as foreseen by all the prophets to fulfill finally the mission of Abraham and his descendants through Israel.³ They are the heirs and descendants of those who were scattered long ago in the days when the prophets such as Joel were called to warn them.

In those days the locust plagues, the armies from the north, the wind and weather and the failing fertility of the fields caused the Israelites of old to suffer, but they did not repent — or if they did, it was temporarily. The Assyrian army was not stayed and ten of the tribes were captured, enslaved, scattered, and lost. Later the tragedy was repeated in Judah; the Babylonian army swept over, and Judah went to captivity. The experience of Israel was as a prototype of the cleansing of the

world in the “day of the LORD” in the fulness of the times of the gentiles when the wicked of the world who still reject Him shall be rejected and removed.

But a remnant shall be left in the last days as in former times. Those who will hearken, turn, and supplicate the LORD, rending their hearts and not their garments, showing repentance that is real, and not merely for show, shall know that God is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.” They shall find that he can change imminent doom to salvation.⁴ So it shall come to pass in the last days in the time of the harvest that all unbelieving peoples (“the heathen”) shall be brought to “the valley of decision” and to the “valley of Jehoshaphat” (Judgment of Jehovah). They who have not heard of Him or have heard and not believed shall be warned and challenged. Against those who take up arms the LORD shall lead His “army.”⁵ The opponents, typified by Edom and Egypt of old, shall be left desolate for their violence against those who serve the Lord.

Then the gathered of the Lord from the nations whence He has called them, who have called upon His name⁶ and have been saved from wars and cataclysms,⁷ shall find fertile fields once more where they may live in peace and plenty.⁸

Such is the vision of the ancient prophet Joel. His name means “Jehovah is God,” and his message is that Jehovah reigns.⁹

For the crises of our times as for other times he says:

*Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, . . .*¹⁰

In the valley of decision we are challenged, and we must decide whether for Him or against Him we will go.

—Ellis T. Rasmussen.

1 Joseph Smith 2:41. Italics ours.

2 Joel 2:28-32.

3 Isaiah 54, 55, 56; Ezekiel 37, 38; Jeremiah 32, 33; Hosea 13, etc. Many prophets speak of the fulfillment in the last days of Israel's mission to the other peoples of the world. The basic mission call may be read in Genesis 13:1-3, and in Abraham 2:6-11.

4 Joel 1:14, 2:12-14.

5 Compare Joel 2:11; 3:16-21.

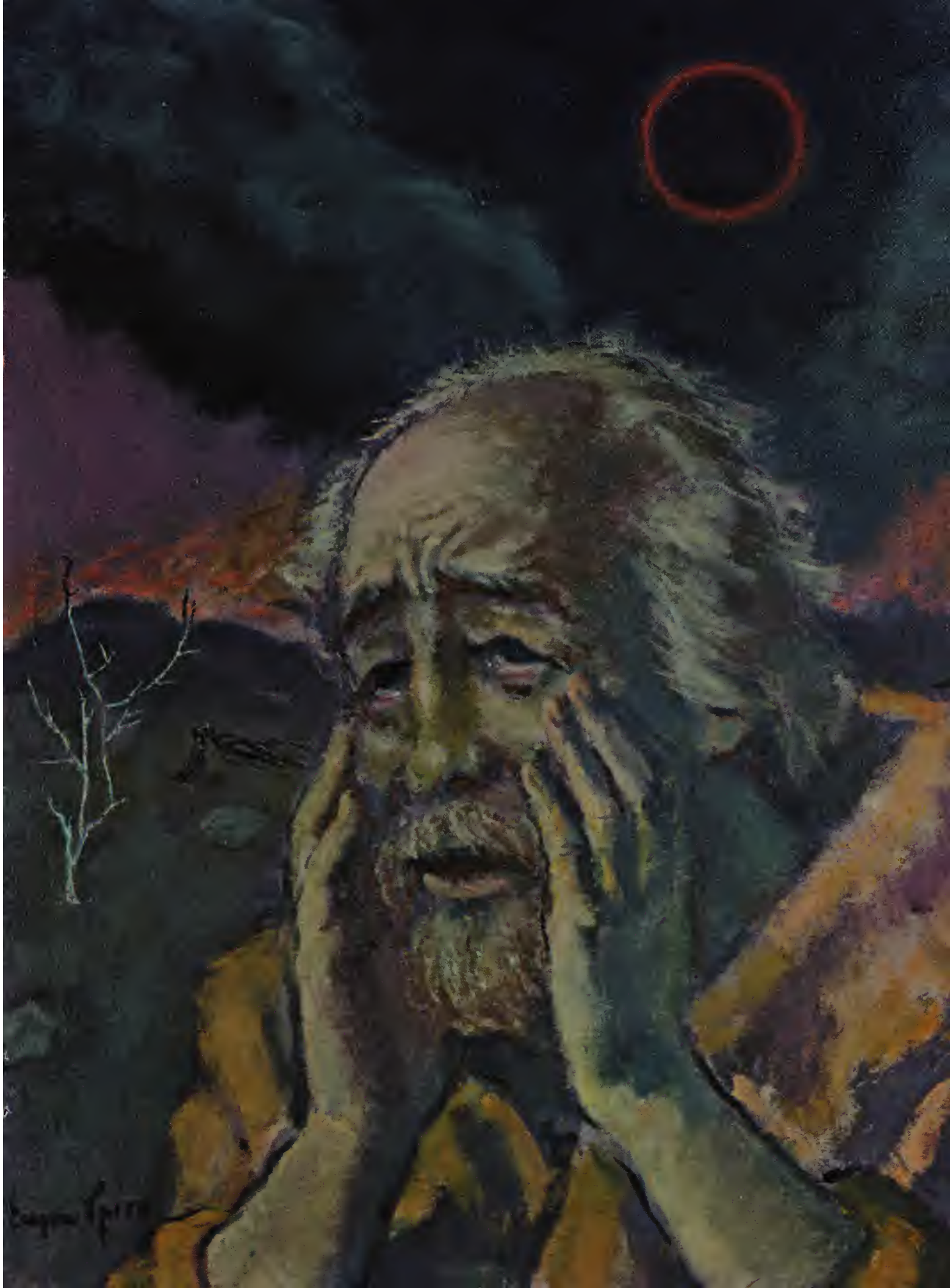
6 Joel 2:32.

7 Joel 2:30-32; compare Doctrine and Covenants 29:7-11, 14-15; 45:39-43.

8 Joel 2:21-27; compare 3:17, 18. See also Amos 9:14, 15, and Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Doctrine and Covenants 133.

9 “LORD,” all in capital letters, is found in the English version of the Bible wherever “JHVH” (i.e. Jehovah) occurs in the Hebrew Bible.

10 Joel 2:12, 13. The last clause of the passage is omitted because it is not well translated, according to the Hebrew text and as compared to the Inspired Revision. But the intent of the message is carried by the portion quoted.



THE PICTURE

A moment of truth — a sign of impending judgment — seems to be painted by artist Spiro in this earth-scorched, sun-blackened scene. The prophet's anguished concern for his fellow men is expressed in his face.

And now, in these latter days, surely "the day of the Lord is near. . . ."

—*Virgil B. Smith.*



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OT 45



OT 46



OT 50