A Patristic Commentary



The Book of Joel

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY

The Book of

JOEL

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

2007

Translated by
DR. GEORGE BOTROS

English Text revised by

ST. MARK COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
Washington D. C. USA
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CENTER
Orange – California

In the name of the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit One God.
Amen

Title: The book of Joel.
Author: Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty.
Translated by: Dr. George Botros.
Edition: 2007 (in English).
Published by: St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church, Sporting, Alexandria.
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church,
Washington D. C. USA

A CALL TO RENEWAL

This book like all the other books of the Holy Bible is addressed personally to you; to read, digest, and live with joy and pleasure.

It is the book of repentance that grants a continuous spiritual renewal.

This book brings us over to the throne of the grace of God, to experience the divine plan for our chastisement, and to enjoy the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and working in our life.

The prophet Joel was a contemporary to the attacks of the locusts, and saw how they turned the sky into a dark cloud. Yet by his inner insight, he realized that the sun is behind that cloud; and that God is very compassionate toward His people, even during the bitterest moments of chastisement.

While most of the prophets prophesied about the Person of the Lord Christ, about His attributes and His ministry; Joel concentrated on the gift of the Holy Spirit, Whom the Lord Christ sent on the day of the Pentecost (Joel 2: 29; Acts 2: 16); to transform the wilderness of our hearts into the fruitful paradise of God.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOEL

The word '**Joel**' in Hebrew, means (Jehovah is God); a common name in the Holy Book (1 Samuel 8: 2; 1 Chronicles 4: 35-43; 5: 4, 12;; 6: 36; 7; 3; 11: 38; 15: 7; 27: 20; 2 Chronicles 29: 12; Ezra 10: 43; Nehemiah 11: 9) …

About this prophet, we only know what came in this book. He was introduced to us by someone by the name of 'Pseudo-Epiphanius', in his work 'Life of the prophets', as being referred to the tribe of 'Reuben'; And born and buried in 'Beth Horon' or 'Beth Or', about 10 miles north-west of Jerusalem. The majority of scholars[1], however, believe that Joel was an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and most probably referred to the tribe of 'Judah'; on account of the fact that all his talk concentrated on Jerusalem; on the sound of the horns of the priests; and on the meetings of the priests with the people, in the house of the Lord, etc… ; that represent a clear and prominent line in the whole book.

HISTORY OF THE BOOK:

While the early Jewish scholars believe that Joel was one of the pre-captivity prophets; the later Jewish scholars, on the other hand, find great difficulty in fixing the exact date of the prophet, and consequently of his book it[2].

Father Theodoret, and **St. Jerome**, believe that Joel was a contemporary to the early days of the prophet 'Hosea'; namely before the captivity; However, there is a great controversy among the later scholars; some of whom refer him to the period before the captivity, while others refer him to that after it.

There are some scholars who even believe that Joel was one of the very early prophets who were familiar in his youth with the prophets Elijah and Elisha[3].

'Knabenbauer' collected the views of the scholars who believe that 'Joel' was one of the post-captivity prophets; that could be summarized as follows[4]:

(1) The prophet talks about the priests and the elders as being the leaderships of the people (1: 2, 13, 14; 2: 17); Yet with no mention of the king, as a leader, or even as a partaker of the congregation in their collective repentance; Which indicate that his talk concerns the period after the captivity, when Israel and Judah were without a king.

(2) The prophet addresses his talk to Judah and Jerusalem, with no mention to the northern kingdom of Israel.

(3) The prophet does not mention anything about an altar outside Jerusalem in Samariah, the capital of Israel. He does not as well, refer to the idol-worship, and that of Baal, that has prevailed in Israel and Judah, during and after the captivity.

(4) The prophet calls the priests "The ministers of Jehovah", a name known only much later after the captivity.

A group of scholars confirm that the book of Joel was written about 400 BC, after the fall of Babylon (539 BC); having not mentioned its name; Before the time of Alexander the Great; having not mentioned the Greeks as a mighty opponent country, but only as one who traded in slaves (3: 3); Before the desolation of Sidon (3: 4); And after Nehemiah built the wall of Jerusalem in the year 445 BC (2: 9).

---

[1] *The pulpit Commentary, Joel, 1962. p VI.*
[2] *Intemational Critical Comm, Joel, 1974.*
[3] *Henrietta C.mears: What the Bible is all about, 1987.*
[4] اكتفيت بأهم العناصر كما أضفت إليها أراء الدارسين الآخرين.

Those, on the other hand, who say that Joel appeared before the captivity, believe that the previously mentioned proofs are all weak; and introduce their own proofs to contradict them[1], of which are the following:

(1) The prophet did not refer to the king, nor called on him to join the priests and the elders in repentance; Either because the king, at that time, was under age (Jehoash was seven years old when he became a king (2 Kings 11: 21); … Or because the king did not concern himself with the issues of agriculture – as the largest part of the book concentrated on the locust attacks that made the land barren and dry; … Or because the call to repentance was a call of the inner heart, and the prophet intended to bind the people to ritual spiritual work, rather than to preoccupy them with politics.

(2) Not mentioning the idol-worship and that of Baal in particular, does not mean that the prophet wrote his book after the captivity; as although the rituals concerning Baal have been abolished by conformers; Yet, after the captivity, there was another diversion through the new occupational authority. Thus disregarding the old, as well as the new one, might be on account that the prophet was writing in a short and concise way, caring only for the positive aspect; namely, the worship of the living God, with a spiritual thought and sound rituals.

(3) Several scholars confirm that some prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Amos in particular, have quoted certain phrases from Joel, and not the other way round.

(4) If Joel came after the captivity, why has he not referred to it; especially in his talk about God's judgment on the nations, and His chastisement of His own people?! His reference to the reversal of captivity, and the judgment on the nations that humiliated Israel, was rather as a futurist prophecy, yet to come (3: 2, 3).

(5) The prophet refers to Egypt, as an opponent nation against Judah (3: 19), which does not apply to the time after captivity, but to that before it. On another aspect, he does not mention the Samerites, the Emmonites, and others, among the opponent nations to be judged after captivity; But mentioned the Phoenicians, Philistinians, and the Edomites, that were opponents before the captivity.

(6) He does not refer to the existence of a northern kingdom of Israel, but speaks about 'Israel' as one people (2: 27; 3: 2, 16); On one aspect, As his ministry was concentrated on the kingdom of Judah, he does not have to talk about the northern kingdom; And on another aspect, by the spirit of prophecy, he looks at 'Israel' as an authentic name, not only of the people as a whole (the two kingdoms), but of the whole church of the New Testament.

Besides, there is a third group of scholars, like: Konig, Orelli, Kirkpatrick, and Cameron, who divide the book into two divisions:

A- Including the first two chapters 1 and 2, according to the Hebrew division (1, 2: 1 – 27); claiming them to be written before the captivity.

B- Including the two chapters 2: (28-32) and 3; written after the captivity.

But the majority of the scholars looks at the book as one unit in thought and language; believe that it was not written in two different eras; and that the Spirit did not inspire it through two authors.

---

[1] *The Pulpit Comm., P IX, X.*
J. H. Rulpit: O. T. Introduction, P 213: 214.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK:

(1) When Joel listened to the horrible sound of the locust attacks that utterly devastated Judah; … When he saw how their pitch darkness filled the air, eclipsed the sun, turned everything gloomy, and transformed the green fields into a barren wilderness with not a single green leaf …; When he saw how they entered through openings into every room, with no savior in sight from that terrible army!! … When he saw all that, the prophet, with his delicate poetic sensitive nature, his flaring zeal, and his piercing insight, recognized the hidden hand of God, moving every single locust to occupy its designated position, for the sake of the chastisement and the judgment of evil.

God revealed to His prophet yet another scenario, more bitter and cruel; namely that of other attacks by foreign armies, allowed by Him to chasten His people. In case they could not understand by the language of the locusts and that of the drought, He will talk to them with that of the killing, and the captivation by foreign armies… That is the day of the Lord, which will soon come to judge the evil; a day of darkness for the wicked.

Yet, God would not leave His people without a Helper; But proclaims through His prophet, that He will pour His Holy Spirit on everyone, to prepare humanity for the ultimate day of the Lord … To be a Helper for them; so that the day of the Lord would become a day of darkness for the wicked, and a day of light for the righteous!!

This book reveals God's plan for mankind … When He speaks to them with every language; keeps nothing from them; and grants them even His Spirit, to prepare them for the day when He encounters them, brings them to dwell together with Him, and to enjoy His glories.

(2) This book – as seen by some scholars -- **is the book of pouring the Holy Spirit on mankind** … If it is the book of "the day of the Lord", in which He judges the sin and evil; Yet, He presents His Holy Spirit Who "*Will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16: 8). … The Lord who has judged the sin in the body; Carried its curse on our behalf, to grant us His glorious life in us; … Having paid the wages of sin, He sent to us His Holy Spirit, in order to let us live with no debt; And granted us the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

(3) Having watched how the horrible locusts burned every fruit in the fields; The prophet thought about how the sin has corrupted the vine and fig tree of the Lord, brought on a state of great dryness, fruitlessness; and voidance; and has withered away joy from the sons of men (1: 12)…. Because of all that, there was a great need for the work of the fiery Holy Spirit, to dwell on mankind, to bring them back to a state of fulfillment with God, and of joy in Him … If the fire of sin has devoured the open pastures (1: 20); **the fire of the Holy Spirit will turn the wilderness into a divine paradise – fruitful and joyful**.

(4) The book of Joel is unique among all the other prophetic books, in assigning no certain date for his prophecy: He did not mention the names of the kings of Judah or of those of Israel, who were contemporary to him; His prophecy concentrates on "the day of the Lord" that is soon to come. … It is as though the divine inspiration proclaims that this is a prophecy intended for all generations; … That every human soul would anticipate the day of the Lord as being near at hand … in order to be prepared for it by the Holy Spirit dwelling in her; would judge herself, so as not to be judged; and would receive the reproach of the Spirit here, in order to enjoy the glory on that day …

(5) If the prophets as a whole have talked about the chastisements by God on His people, to make them return to Him and to His kingdom, presenting the Messianic work of salvation, and the appearance of the Son of David, the spiritual King, who would bring all nations to the bosom of His Father … ; Yet every prophet have dealt with the issue of repentance and the return to God from a certain angle:

Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, spoke about the repentance through forsaking oppression; … Ezra and Nehemiah, through the consistent work in building the temple of God and the walls of Jerusalem; … While Jeremiah and Ezekiel, spoke about it through the reform of the inner heart, and not just through the outer formal appearances. … Joel, on the other hand, being the prophet of the living ecclesiastical ritual, that is not separate from the inner spiritual constructive one; … While looking toward Jerusalem, the temple, and the priests; he was also looking toward the inner Jerusalem, the hidden temple, and the screams of the heart! … The ritual in his eyes, is not formal duties to which the congregation are committed; but is an integrated part of the spiritual constructive life of the congregation in the Lord …

(6) This book, like the previous one (of the prophet Hosea), is characterized by its care for the repentance, as a collective thought; Yet, without disregarding the personal relationship that connects the believer to his heavenly Groom; about which I talked in some detail in the introduction of the book of Hosea[1]. This trend is apparent here, in that "*The Lord is zealous for His land (heritage), and pity His people"* (2: 18); He sees every individual as a member in His body (the church), not on his own, nor self-centered …

Having collectively partaken of the evil; the people are, as well, committed to the fellowship in repentance; each one of them, being a fellow member in the same body, is committed to support his brother.

(7) If the prophet, on account of the circumstances surrounding him, is characterized by a prominent nationalism; portraying the Jewish society, as the representative of the Kingdom of God; Yet, talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit, he could not confine it to a specific nation or people; being the gift of God to all mankind (2: 28)…. He opens the door of hope to "*whoever calls on the name of the Lord"* (2: 32).

(8) Concerning the style of his writing, Joel's Hebrew language is highly refined and eloquent; characterized by simplicity, smoothness, clarity, and accuracy. Most of it is written in a delicate poetic, allegoric, and pictorial style.

(9) Joel is called: "The prophet of the five books of Moses"; having quoted 25 times from them[2].

(10) He is also called: "The prophet of the Pentecost"; having presented us the promise of the Holy Spirit.

If this book is "The Book of the Day of the Lord"; We, by the Spirit of God, see that day as a day of a joyful wedding, a day of an eternal resurrection, and of a conquest over death; Whereas the wicked, see it as a day of darkness and eternal judgment.

DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK:

A- The locust attacks, as "a preparation for the day of the Lord" 1.

B- The attacks of enemies, as "a preparation for the day of the Lord" 2: 1 – 27.

---

[1] راجع مقدمة سفر هوشع.

[2] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, 1983, P 320.*

C- The dwelling of the Holy Spirit as "a preparation for the day of the Lord" 2: 28 – 32.
D- The great day of the Lord 3.

CHAPTER 1
THE ATTACKS OF LOCUSTS AS A PREPARATION FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD

The prophet describes the four attacks of locusts that happened in his days, not only as natural calamities, but as being a part of God's plan for our salvation, through allowing for chastisement for the sake of our return to him with repentance.

1- The attacks of locusts	**1 – 4**
2- The results of the attacks	**5 – 12**
3- A call for repentance	**13 – 14**
4- A need for an Intercessor	**15 – 20**

1. THE ATTACKS OF LOCUSTS:

The prophet starts his book by saying: "***The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel***" (1). If the word "Pethuel" in Hebrew means (God opens); he gave birth to "Joel", a word which means (Jehovah is God). It is as though, by opening our inner insight, God proclaims Himself to us, that He is "Jehovah"; namely, (The Being); beside whom all would become as though (not being) or (naught).

In His first encounter with Moses, the first leader of the people, God said to him: "*Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'. This is My name forever, and this is My title for all generations"* (Exodus 3: 15).

In a commentary by 'Phelon of Alexandria', the Jewish scholar on this divine name, he says: [First tell them that "I am the Being", to draw their attention to the difference between Him who is "Being", and him who is not[1]].

Let us then have inside us, 'Pethuel'; Namely, let us have God open our insight, to conceive His secrets; Let us go to Him, and be with Him, the "Everlasting Being"; Let us not give Him our back, lest we return to nothingness, according to the words of **St. Augustine**: [Whoever takes the direction, opponent to God, would be heading to nothingness[2]].

After this very concise introduction, he talks to them about the attacks of the locust, saying:

"***Hear this you elders; and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it. Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation. What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten"*** **(Joel 1: 2-4)**

If the prophet seeks from the elders to hear the word of the Lord; He, as well, seeks from all the inhabitants of the land to give ear; God wishes to talk to all mankind with no exception!! He seeks to encounter with every man, to proclaim the dealings of His love for him.

---

[1] *Phila: vita mos. 1: 14: 75/*
[2] *On Ps. 39.*

The prophet seeks from them, as well, to tell their children about it; namely, about the voice and the dealings of the Lord; in order to give their life experience to the next generation; and every generation to give it to the next one. This is how 'tradition' is delivered, which, in its essence, concerns 'the dealings of God with mankind'. That is why the apostle Paul says: "*The things which you learned, received, heard, and saw in me, these do"* (Philippians 4: 9). And **St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa** says: [This 'tradition' or 'delivery', which we successively received as a heritage from our ancestors, through the saints, since the time of the apostles, is enough to prove the worthiness of our worship[1]] … Every generation is committed to deliver the gospel of the Lord to the following generation, as a secret of a practical life through the sound dogma, the living worship, and the spiritual behavior.

As far as the attacks of the locusts mentioned here are concerned; While the majority of scholars believe that they were actual phenomena, witnessed by the prophet. Other scholars assume that they are only visionary prophecies of what to happen later on, especially in later times.

The '**chewing** locust' is the stage of life history, that emerges from the egg, unable to move.

The '**swarming** locust' is the stage, when they start to move around.

The '**crawling** locust', is the stage, when two little wings develop on them.

And the '**consuming** locust', is the stage, as they set forth to fly.

Several of the Jewish scholars, even in the days of **St. Jerome,** believe that those four attacks by the locusts, might symbolically refer to four military attacks, that would be carried out by Sennacherib, king of Assyria against Judah (Isaiah 36); Or might refer to four nations that would prevail against Israel and Judah: Namely, either refer to Assyria, Babylon, Mady, and Persia; … Or to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Greece … Anyway, the early church accepted this symbolic reference, without denying their actual occurrences.

In those four attacks by the chewing, the swarming, the crawling, and the consuming stages of locusts, the following should be noticed:

(1) As we know, the figure 4, may refer to the world, with its four directions (the East, the West, the North, and the South); As well as to the body, taken from the earth; namely from the world. It is as though, those attacks represent the war of the love of this world against the believer; and the attacks of the body lusts against his Spirit. … When man falls under sin, God allows for him to be chastised through his own sin;…. God allows for the believer who deviates toward the love of the world, and the lusts of the body, to be forsaken for sometime, to attacks by both of them; to let him realize that sin bears its corruption and bitterness in itself; and allows for him to be chastised by the same fault he has committed.

This is what God continuously confirm to us: that the chastisements that dwell on us are a natural fruit of something we have committed; saying: "*Have you not brought this on yourself?"* (Jeremiah 2: 17); and, "*Your ways and your doings have procured these things for you, This is your wickedness, Because it is bitter, Because it reaches to your heart"* (Jeremiah 4: 18).

[1] *Contra Eunom. 4. PG 45: 953.*

When man forsakes God, the Truth, and connects to the vain love of the world, and the temporary lusts of the body, he would expect to become, himself, vain, and would lose every true thing.

Because Judah loved the world, and not God; … the lusts of the body, and not the Spirit; He became earth and not heaven, and a body without Spirit.

Out of God's love for us, … As we consent through our own will, to become earth and not heaven; He allows for a variety of violent temporal earthly calamities, like volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, storms, pestilences, drought, locust attacks, and such material losses; In order to shake our earth; … That we may forsake it, and hasten to God, who alone can renew our earth and turn it into a heaven for Himself!!

In case our earth, namely, our body, has given itself up to bodily lusts; God allows for the locust attacks, as natural fruit of our sins, to consume what we assume to be joyful fruit; … Then we would escape to God, who alone can sanctify us, and rid us of our evil works; … Not to destroy us, but to destroy the evil that has dwelt in us and occupied the center of our heart; … to drive it away, in order to reign in us instead, … and to grant us by His Holy Spirit, new fruit, that befits the new man.

Hence we should not marvel that the book starts by those locust attacks, to proclaim the invasion of our hearts by the Holy Spirit (2: 28-32); Through which we lose the fruit of the old man, and his dead works; to enjoy the fruit of the new man, on an exalted divine level!!

Allow, O Lord, for Your chastisements on me, however bitter they might be; As when, through them, I feel the bitterness of my sins, my soul would then long for the work of Your Holy Spirit, the Grantor of life, that dwells in me.!!

God clarifies to His wise servant Solomon, His intentions through allowing for the locusts attacks, by saying: *"When I command the Locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among the people,… If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,… Then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal the land"* (2 Chronicles 7: 13, 14).

He allows for the locusts, not to destroy us, but to destroy our wickedness; to let us seek His face, and to respond to His Holy Spirit dwelling in us; in order to have our sins forgiven. Yet, unfortunately, we sometimes act against our own interests; as the children of Israel often did; and rebuked by God, saying to them: "'*The locusts have often devoured your gardens, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me', says the Lord"* (Amos 4: 9).

(2) God begins His chastisement for man by allowing for the attacks of the tiny chewing locusts. If we do not return to him, He would allow for that of the swarming locusts; If we do not repent, it would be the turn of the crawling, then of the consuming locusts; And in case we still do not respond to all these chastisements, He would allow for the military human attacks against us. … Then the day of the Lord would finally come, with its complete darkness. … He chastens us step by step; that if we submit to Him, He would have compassion on us.

(3) These successive stages of locust attacks, probably refer to the war of sin against us, and its invasion of our hearts. It starts with the tiny (chewing) stage, that crawl secretly into our heart, thoughts, and senses, like the *"little foxes that spoil the vines"* (Songs 2: 15), for which man may not pay much attention, until they reign on the heart and corrupt it. After the tiny (chewing) stage of sins have played their hidden role, the

door would be open before the (swarming) stage of sins to come against us; Every stage of sin hands us to the next, for us to become like toys in their hands. Then the enemy would ultimately dare to bring us into the most horrible (crawling) stage, that would bring us forth, down to the bottomless pit, as revealed in the book of Revelation (9: 1-12), … darkening the light of the sun; striking like scorpions, and producing sound like that of chariots with many horses running into battle. In other words, every slothfulness on our part, would lead us to a more dangerous stage, until we are brought over to the destructive locusts of the bottomless pit.

St. Mark the hermit says: [Satan presents to us little sins that would seem in our eyes of no importance; As otherwise, he cannot bring us over to greater sins[1]].

2- THE RESULTS OF THE ATTACKS:

"Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine. For it has been cut off from your mouth" **(Joel 1: 5)**

At the beginning, he asked them to "*hear, and to give ear"*; But now, being attacked by the locusts, he asks them to awake from their drinking of the wine of the world, which has corrupted their minds, and destroyed their true wisdom; It would be fitting for them to awake from their drinking, to weep and wail on the deprivation they have reached!!

{There is that kind of drinking which is difficult for the soul to avoid; when we are caught in the interests of this world, even if we are in solitude; about which the prophet says: *"Awake, you drunkards (but not with wine)"*. And another prophet says: *"They are drunk, but not with wine"* (Isaiah 29: 9); but with what the prophet calls "the poison of the serpent"

Do you want to know more about the fruits of those vines? About them it is said: "Their grapes are grapes of poison, and they have Bunches of bitterness". … As, If we fail to purify ourselves of all those faults, and to detest all those lusts, Our hearts would become heavy with some kind of more dangerous wine, … without being drunk with regular wine, nor being filled in rich banquets[2]].

Being drunkards by the wine of the love of this world, they deny themselves the new wine; namely, "the Holy Spirit", by which the soul staggers with the love of God.

Calling them drunkards, he asks them, at the same time, to weep and wail because the new wine has been cut off from their mouths; Having denied themselves of (the wine of the Holy Spirit), that the disciples have enjoyed on the day of the Pentecost; when the apostle Peter stood and said: "*For these are nut drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh …"* (Acts 2: 15-17).

Let the old Israel wail, because, having rejected the dwelling of the Spirit in them; the new heavenly wine will be cut off their mouth; ….

And let the new Israel, men of the New Testament, rejoice; having rejected the wine of the world; namely, the works of the old man, to enjoy the life-giving wine.

---

[1] مقالان عن الناموس الروحي 94.

[2] *Cassian: Conf. 9: 6.*

Asking those drunk with the wine of the world to awake and be reasonable, because the locust attacks have already come upon them, the prophet reveals the activity of those attacks on many aspects; in their exposure of the works of sin in us.

(1) He says: "***For a nation has come up against My land, strong and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lioness***" (6). Even though the individual locust, in any of its growth stages, is not more than a tiny insect that man can crush under his foot, or even with his finger, Yet when the locusts gather in swarms, they may turn into very strong and dangerous armies, that are difficult to overcome.

In admonition He says: "… has come up against **my land**"; As what comes upon us because of our sins, even though through divine allowance for our chastisement; He considers anything that touches us, as though it touches His own **land**; for we are **God's land**, that He sets for the righteousness to dwell (2 Peter 3: 13). Thus, the sin which we commit would do wrong to God in His own land.

The secret of the strength of that (nation), without number, lies in its mouth, about which he says: "Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a fierce lioness" (6). The foreign serpent has once opened its mouth to talk to Eve; and when the later got slothful, she, her man, and her descendants as well, have all come to perdition. Therefore, let us beware of the talks of the deceitful devil; Let us flee from them as though from the teeth of the lion, and the fangs of the lioness. The wise Solomon says that the wisdom of God: "*will keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words*" (Proverbs 7: 5).

It would be fitting for us not to be deceived by the smooth words of the devil, lest they would tear us apart; And it would also be fitting for us to be aware, lest we ourselves would become his teeth, that are like those of a lion; to use us to tear apart the life and faith of others. Because, if "*our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5: 8), Let us not be his tool to tear our brothers apart.

Whoever delivers his mouth to the devil, would become like teeth in the mouth of a fierce lion; As according to **St. John Chrysostom**: [Peter uttered a word, and then wept bitterly, because he forgot the saying: "*I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue*" (Psalm 39:1); and, "*A slip from the pavement is better than a slip from the tongue*" (Sirach 20: 18) [1].

Whereas he who delivers his mouth to the Lord, would become like teeth in the mouth of the Lion who comes from the tribe of Judah, Would bear the spirit of conquest, of victory, and of life, through testifying to Him; … He would not tear the life of his brothers apart, but would rather tear the work of the devil, the adversary to the Truth.

We, therefore, are teeth: either in the mouth of the lion, adversary to the Truth; Or in the mouth of the Lion, the Truth;… According to the wise words: "*A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth, And from the produce of his lips he shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (Proverbs 18: 20, 21).

(2) "***He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree"*** (7). If our slothfulness with the sin has corrupted our life – the land of God – to become a field for the invading adversary; a nation without number; fierce with teeth like those of a lion, and fangs of a lioness; That has "*laid waste the Lord's vine and His fig tree*".

---

[1] *Ladder 11: 7.*

The Lord calls His people *"His vine and fig tree"*; As the vine presents the grapes that, together with the Lord, pass through the wine-press, bear the features of His passion, and enter with Him to the power of His resurrection. And the fig, with its sweet outer cover that embraces a great number of tiny seeds, refers to the work, the love and unity of the sweet Holy Spirit, who embraces the members together, with no isolation or individuality[1].

The sin makes the vine and the fig tree lose their distinctive feature; namely, destroys the work of the crucified Christ, and that of the Holy Spirit in us. The sin so destroys the vine of the Lord, and ruins His fig tree; that the believers would not receive the wine-press with joy, to present new wine in the Kingdom of God the Father; or would not walk with the spirit of love and unity, which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

God feels joy as He sees His people, *"like grapes in the wilderness; as the firstfruits on the fig tree,* that fulfill His heart (Hosea 9: 10); Yet the sin *"lays waste this vine and ruins this fig tree";* And as it came in the book of Habakkuk: *"The fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines"* (3: 17).

(3) ***"He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white".*** The work of the locusts acts on the outer cuticle of the stem and the branches, to make them bare and look white. It is strange that whiteness usually refers to purity:; In the transfiguration, the Lord Christ appeared with His clothes white as the light (Matthew 17: 2); having inside them the Sun of Righteousness shining with His splendor. And at the holy tomb, St. Mary Magdalene saw two angels in white attire (John 20: 12); This same white color is used by the enemy in his deceit as a sign of uncleanness in case of leprosy (See Leviticus 13:10, 11).

As long as Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is our refuge -- in whom we hide, and in us He dwells – we shall bear His whiteness as light; But if we are taken away from Him through our rejection, we shall be like branches bared of their protective cuticle … with the unclean whiteness of leprosy. The whiteness of Christ lifts us up to heaven, where the heavenly secret of our whiteness is set; Whereas the whiteness of leprosy would drive us out of the camp to live isolated, wear torn clothes, uncover our heads, cover our upper lips, and cry out: 'Unclean, unclean'! (Leviticus 13: 45).

(4) Entering into an early state of widowhood; saying: *"**Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth"*** (8).Committing sin, man thinks that he is fulfilling his deprived soul, and quenching the thirst of his body by carnal pleasures; when he is actually bringing his soul over into a state of widowhood, to put on sackcloth against her will; because she has lost her first Groom -- "God", with whom she was bound since her youth; And in place of wearing the wedding attire, joyful to her and to the heavenly creatures, she puts on the sad sackcloth of widowhood.

Yet, her first Groom of her youth, will keep on flattering her, *"will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her"* (Hosea 2: 14); will take her widowhood attire away, saying to her: *"I will betroth you to me forever"* (Hosea 2: 19). Yet, He would not betroth her while still in the bosom of another man; but would confirm: *"I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy"* (Hosea 2: 19, 20).

(5) *"**The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests mourn, who minister to the Lord"*** (9). The attacks of the divine

[1] *St. Chrysostom: Op Imperfectum Hom 16.*

chastisement reveal how the soul became because of the sin; how she lost her heavenly Groom and became a widow, and how the priests are no longer able to offer a grain offering or a drinking offering to the Lord, who does not accept the offerings of the wicked who give Him their back.

Receiving the offerings in the house of the Lord is a sign of the union between God and His holy people, and of God's pleasure in them. But, as the people fall into abominations, no offering would be received from them without repentance and returning to the Lord; According to the words of the Psalmist: "*For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise"* (Psalm *51*: 16, 17).

In our study of the second epistle of the apostle Paul to Timothy, we saw how the drinking offering refers to the continuous life of Joy, poured abundantly by the Holy Spirit amid the sufferings of the church, being the sacrifice of God, united with the slain Christ[1]. Cutting off the drinking offering, is taking away the perpetual spiritual joy from the people, to be replaced by depression, which is the natural fruit of sin.

We are in need of God receiving "*the grain offering and the drinking offering"* … to bear the feature of the crucified Christ – the grain offering, and that of the spiritual joy -- the drinking offering, if we return by repentance to Him.

(6) The waste of the fruits: "***The field is wasted, the land mourns; For the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. Be ashamed, you farmers, Wail, you vinedressers, For the wheat and barley; Because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree – All the trees of the field are withered; Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men"*** (10-12).

If the sin has wasted the vine of the Lord, and ruined His fig tree; It takes away, as well, every spiritual fruit from the life of the believer, who is the 'land' of the Lord:

a- The field is wasted, the new wine is dried up, and the oil fails. If the 'grain' refers to the necessary daily bread, The 'new wine' refers to the joyful spiritual drink; And the 'oil' to the healing medication. Thus the locusts of sin deprives man of his spiritual food, as well as of his drink and of his medication; to live in a condition, where no one fulfills his hunger, quench his thirst, or to dress his wounds.

God lets man in need of nothing; But in his ignorance, man uses what is God's, to the account of His enemy. God admonishes His bride, "*For she did not know that (He) gave her grain, new wine, and oil, And multiplied her silver and gold – whichthey prepared for Baal"* (Hosea 2: 8).

I wish, through the chastisements of God, we would realize the extent of what our inner condition has reached, would hunger and thirst for the righteousness (Matthew 5: 6), to find the Lord Christ as our living Bread (John 6: 51), a spiritual drink, and oil for our souls.

b- "*The farmers will be ashamed, and the vinedressers will wail"*, When the Lord of the harvest comes to find His field without grain or barley; to find His Shepherds and priests, not presenting the food of the rich (the grain), nor even that of the poor (the barley).

---

[1] راجع.

If the grain is used as food for men, and the barley as food for beasts; sin wastes everything, leaving man (the human soul), and beast (the body), unfulfilled; Man would live in a state of spiritual, psychological, and carnal void and hunger.

c- In the soul – the divine field – there would be no fruit: neither pomegranate, nor palm trees, nor apple trees. The pomegranate refers to the meek nature of Christ, that reflects on the face of the church, His bride; to whom the Lord says: *"Your temples behind your veil, are like a piece of pomegranate"* (Songs 4: 3).

The palm tree refers to the life of uprightness, with no deviation, according to the words by which the divine Groom addresses

His bride, saying: "*The stature of yours is like a palm tree"* (Songs 7: 7).

And the apple tree refer to the incarnation, bearing the joyful fruit for God and men; when the bride says to her incarnate Groom: *"Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight. and his fruit was sweet to my taste"* (Songs 2: 3). Likewise, by the Holy Spirit; Uniting with the apple tree, unique among the fruitless trees in the wilderness; We ourselves would be apples that bring pleasure to the hearts of God and men; and would have the fragrance of our Christ … *"The fragrance of your breath like apples"* (Songs 7: 8).

In other words, being deprived of the pomegranate, palm trees, and apple trees, would only mean taking away the feature of uprightness, and the fragrance of Christ from the human soul.

d- If sin makes man loose his spiritual food (the grain), his drink (the new wine), and his medication (the oil); Makes his soul and body fruitless (the grain and the barley); and deprives him of the features, uprightness, and sweet fragrance of the Lord; … All that would deprive man of his spiritual and his inner joy; saying: *"Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men:"* (12).

There are many, who think of the spoiled life as being all joy and pleasure; and of the life with God as being sadness and depression …; But actually, the spoiled life, amid its apparent happiness, bears an inner bitterness and depression; Whereas the life with God, on the other hand, amid the sufferings and afflictions, presents deep spiritual joy. Sin would make man lose his spiritual joy; while repentance, despite the rough way and the narrow door, would grant him joy and inner peace amid the tears.

That Is why **St. John El-Dargy** wrote a long article on "The wail bearing the joy[1]"; in which he says:

[Hold fast to, and never quit having the (joyful pangs), that go hand in hand with the pain in the heart; to be lifted up above the earthlies; and to be presented pure to Christ]; And, [Whoever is clothed by the (joyful wail), granted to him as a wedding garment; would experience the spiritual laugh of the soul]; and, [Tears that come from the mention of death, would bring about fear; … And in case fear, brings about the peace of heart, Joy would shine; … And once joy calms and settles down, the flower of holy love would flourish up[2]].

3. A CALL TO REPENTENCE:

Through His chastisements, God reveals the bitter fruits of sin in the life of His people:

[1] *Step 7.*
[2] *Step 7: 9, 40, 56.*

- *"For a nation has come against My land, strong and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion"* (6).
- *"He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree"* (7).
- *"He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white"* (7).
- His *virgin* entered into a state of early widowhood (8).
- *"The grain offering and the drink offering"*, which are a sign of God's pleasure and joy for His house, *"have been cut off"* (9)
- *"The grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, and the oil* (the medication) *has failed"* (10).
- The features of the Lord, His uprightness, and sweet fragrance, have been lost (12)
- *"The spiritual joy has withered away from the sons of men"* (12).

But now, the Lord hastens to turn the tears and sadness into repentance; that should be practiced by the priests together with the people; Saying: "*Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sackcloth, You who minister to my God; For the grain offering, and the drink offering are withered from the house of your God"* (13). He addresses His talk to the priests, who minister to the altar, to perform their leading task; not by giving advises and instructions, but foremost, through practicing repentance; in order for them to join their people, and not to be isolated from them. In the following points, he demonstrated the signs of repentance:

(1) "Being **girded**' (13); namely putting on sackcloth. It is not the time for wearing the precious and splendid attires of priesthood; but for putting on sackcloth, that God would show compassion on his fallen children. Putting on sackcloth should go hand in hand with inner humiliation, and contrition of the spirit before God; according to the words of St. John El-Dargy: [Let yourgarment, at least, show a sign of wailing; as all those who wail on their dead, put on black[1]].

(2) ***"Lament and wail"***. It is fitting for the priest, not to seek the tears from his spiritual brethren and children, while he, himself, bears dry feelings; But he should practice what he seeks from them; He should say together with the prophet: "*For the hurt of the daughter of my people, I am hurt. I am mourning; Astonishment has taken hold of me; … Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people*" (Jeremiah 8: 21; 9: 1).

St. John El-Dargi talking to us about the activity of wailing and tears, says: [Like fire consuming reeds, the pure tear would abolish every carnal and spiritual uncleanness]; and, [Brethren, God does not need or wish for man to weep and lament, but would rather wish him to rejoice, and have joy in his love. … Man! Take away that sin; so that the painful tear in the sensual eye, would not be needed; As there would be no need for cleansing, when there is no wound. Before his disobedience, Adam had no tears. And there would be no tears after resurrection; when sin, and with it, pain, grief, and sighs, are no more[2]]

[1] *Ibid 7: 22.*
[2] *Ibid 7: 31. 45.*

(3) Holding a **fast** for this purpose; As repentance would touch the life of every man, of the priest in particular -- the sighs of his heart; the screams of his mouth, of his clothes, and those of his stomach. Man should talk to God, and proclaim his repentance in every possible way; His actions should support each other, to proclaim his longing for returning to God.

Fasting is the language of the flesh, interacting with the spirit, the thought, and the senses, in order to proclaim the desire for an encounter with God, through a life sanctified in Him.

St. John El-Dargy says: [The mind of the one who fasts would pray with pure thoughts; Whereas that of the greedy, would be Filled with unclean images]; and [Filling the stomach with food, dries up the tears of the eyes; Whereas when the stomach dries up through fasting, Fountains of tears would flow over from the eyes]; and [Controlling our stomach, would humiliate ourheart; Whereas when spoiling it, our mind gets haughty[1]].

And **father (Mar) Isaac the Syrian** says: [A saint said: The weaker the body gets through fasting, the stronger spiritually the soul would become by prayers[2]].

(4) **Calling a sacred assembly.** He says to the priests: "*Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord"* (14). Here the prophet proclaims the commitment to call for a sacred assembly; namely, for a collective celebration of repentance. As long as the whole congregation have partaken of evil, they should likewise partake of repentance. In the introduction to the book of Hosea, we talked about the collective repentance that goes hand in hand with the individual spiritual life; and about the hidden relationship between the soul -- being a member in the holy congregation – and God. If the priest represents the leadership in man, It is fitting for the leadership to call for a sacred assembly, and for a gathering of the elders, and of all the inhabitants of the land; Namely, man should assemble all his senses, energies, and possibilities; as though they are the elders of the land, or the workers of the body.

So that man may present a repentance originating from all his actions and his spiritual, mental, and body capabilities. The priests should gather together with the inhabitants of the land in the house of the Lord; Namely, the spirit should work with all her energies, together with the body with its energies, under the leadership of the Lord; And man should cry out with his whole being to his God.

The sacred assembly should be held in the house of the Lord our God; Namely, we should flee from the wrath of God, by resorting to Him, taking refuge in His compassionate love, and His longsuffering. And as it came in the book of Isaiah: "*Let Him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with Me; And he shall make peace with Me"* (Isaiah 27: 5).

4. THE NEED FOR AN INTERCESSOR:

The priests with the elders, assembling together in the house of the Lord, all lament and wail, realizing what the sin has done in them; In anticipation of the One who, alone, can intercede on their behalf by His atoning blood, to save them from the divine wrath on that horrible day. The prophet demonstrates these two integral issues: The

[1] *Ibid 14: 19, 20, 22.*
[2] *Mystical Treatises, St. Isaac the Syrian, vol 1, P 179.*

realization of the extent of the bitterness and horror that we feel toward the day of the Lord; And the need for an Intercessor, capable of reconciling us with God.

Concerning the extent of how far we have reached, he says: : "***Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes; Joy and gladness from the house of God? The seed grain shrivels under the clods, Storehouses are in shambles; Barns are broken down, For the grain has withered. How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer your punishment*"* **(Joel 1: 15-18).**

In short, we have become in a state of hunger; Food is cut off before our eyes; We shall be fulfilled by no one but God Himself, in whose Image, and according to whose likeness we are created. The Lord Christ, the incarnate Word of God, has probably been born in a manger; So that when man becomes like a hungry beast, he would head toward the manger to acquire a new food, fit to eternally fulfill him; … When he listens to Him saying: "*I am the bread of life… which comes down from heaven, that one may eat it and not die …The bread that I shall give is My flesh which I shall give for the life of the world … Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh Of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you"* (John 6: 48-53).

Because food is cut off; joy and gladness are taken away, … Because the soul has isolated herself by herself from God, the Source of her joy, It became in a state of depression, and even in a state of death; that she cannot say: *"I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation"* (Habakkuk 3: 18) …

The soul became in a state of desolation, with no spiritual fruition. The grain shriveled under the clods, the storehouses in shambles; and became with no hope; Even the beasts (the body) groan, and the herds of sheep are no more. Man would lose even the carnal things for the sake of which he has committed the sin.

In other words we can say that through sin, curse has dwelt upon everything, even upon earth; according to the words of the Lord to Adam: "*Cursed is the earth because of you"* (Genesis 3: 17) … There is no more place for blessing.

Now, having realized the extent of what we have reached, of the curse that has dwelt upon us and upon the earth, upon its plants and its beasts, Joel

Interfered as an intercessor; Or, more accurately, as a symbol of the true Intercessor, Jesus Christ, who alone cries out to His Father, and He responds to Him. He says: "*To You, O Lord, I cry out"* ; not for His own sake, but for that of the people, … "for the open pastures devoured by fire, and for the water brooks that have dried up" (19, 20).

This is the Intercessor who dwells in the heart, "the inner Jerusalem", to reconcile the soul and the body with all their energies with the Father; He in whom the Father finds joy, and whom He seeks, saying: *"Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places if you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, And I will pardon her"* (Jeremiah 5: 1). He is our Lord Jesus Christ, hidden in the inner Jerusalem, by whom we get the forgiveness of our sins.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOEL 1

INSTEAD OF THE LOCUST ATTACKS,
GRANT ME YOUR FIERY SPIRIT

❖ Count me, O Lord, like Joel, a son of Pethoel (God opens)!
Open, O Lord, my heart, to behold You in it; to recognize You; and to conceive Your wisdom.

❖ The sins of Judah brought down on their land four locust attacks.
Attacks by the chewing, the swarming, the crawling, and the consuming locusts.
My sins brought down on me Your chastisements; that would gradually become more cruel, in hope that I would repent.
My sins turned my heart into a barren land.
Instead of the locust attacks, Let Your Holy Spirit blow on the land of my heart.
To turn my wilderness into a fruitful paradise.
To turn my land into a heaven, where no single locust can approach.

❖ Chasten, O Lord, Stretch Your hand!
But, Do not allow for my perdition; But for the perdition of the corruption that came on me.
You may allow bitterness for me, But You seek the eternal joy of my salvation.

❖ Sin has caused in me famine and drought;
Has corrupted my peace, and taken away my internal joy.
Has turned my wedding into mourning.
Has taken Your sweet fragrance away from me.
Has deprived me of the grain offering and the drink offering of joy.
Has taken the blessing away from me; and brought its curse on me.
Who can save me of it but You, O Savior of the world; O My heavenly Intercessor!
You are my fulfillment. my peace, my joy, and the source of every blessing.

CHAPTER 2
THE ATTACKS OF ENEMIES AS ANOTHER PREPARATION FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD

Having not responded to the divine warning through the locust attacks, God spoke to Judah by a more bitter voice; namely, by the attacks of enemies. Yet, while wounding, He presents to him His Holy Spirit, to grant him the possibility of bandaging through rebukes on his sins, to return to him.

1- Destructive desolation	**1 – 11**
2- A call to repentance	**12 – 17**
3- God will pity His people	**18 – 27**
4- An ultimate reform by the Holy Spirit	**28 – 32**

1. DESTRUCTIVE DESOLATION:

Having not benefited from the attacks by locusts; As said by the prophet Amos: *"I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees, The locusts devoured them; Yet you have not returned to Me"* (Amos 4: 9); God started to speak to the people about another form of chastisement; namely, the destructive attacks of enemies; saying:

***"Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming"* (Joel 2: 1)**

(1) Blowing the trumpet has been a task of the priests; at the start of the march in the wilderness; … For the declaration of war; … For the anointment of a king; … For the celebration of feasts, etc. The trumpet were made of silver (Leviticus 10); referring to the divine commandment, or the divine Word, that works in the soul during her strife, and her war against sin; filling her with joy and rejoice, with every inner divine work.

God commands blowing the trumpet in Zion; not on account that a certain nation is going to attack Zion, But because the day of the Lord is at hand; and all the inhabitants of the land should tremble!

By blowing the trumpet in Zion, He intends to proclaim that it is God who allows for the attack by the enemies, to chasten His people. In case they do not listen to His voice through the commandment, He would come against them through their enemies, to realize their salvation from evil, if they do not listen through His meekness; let them anticipate His firmness!

Let us then hear the warning voice of the trumpet, from the mouths of the priests; … Let us receive the divine commandment; even if it is bitter for the wicked, destroying the evil they love, … *"Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble:"*; Everything earthly, Every disobedience in the heart of the wicked, would shake, and tremble before the divine commandment; …And as it is written:

"If a trumpet is blown in a city, Will not the people be afraid?" (Amos 3: 6).

If blowing the trumpet refers to the coming of the divine Word to the soul; This will definitely be followed by a destruction of every inner idol, that has for long occupied the heart; according to the prophet Isaiah: *"Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and*

will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst" (Isaiah 19: 1).

(2) *"**A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick fog; Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains"*** **(Joel 2: 2)**

If the day of the Lord, for the believers is like a joyful and bright day of wedding, in which the Groom – the Sun of Righteousness -- approaches to encounter His bride, who, like the moon, reflects His light; It is, for the wicked, a day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick fog; during which they are unable to behold the Lord in His glory and splendor, nor to enjoy His secrets.

The prophet Joel looks, to see how the day, because of the locust attacks, has turned into thick darkness; not because there was no sun, but because of the dense waves of locusts that covered the whole land, turning the day in man's eyes into night.

That scene was mentioned in the book of Exodus to describe the day when the plague of locusts came to cover the whole land of Egypt, *"So that the land was black"* (Exodus 10: 14, 15).

Through that scene, the prophet Joel also sees what will happen in Judah by the armies and chariots of the enemies; when, because of their great number, the land would be covered by a dense cloud of dust that causes darkness and gloominess.

The same thing will happen for the wicked on the great day of the Lord, when He comes to judge the world. For them, that day

Will be a day of darkness and gloominess, because of what they bear inside them of sin that would deny them of beholding its splendor.

The darkness and gloominess would also refer to the bitterness and anguish that would dwell upon the soul during the chastisement; that cause man's eyes and his look at the world to become as dark and gloomy.

As to saying: *"**Like the morning clouds spreading over the mountains**"*, It probably is a confirmation of its occurrence; definitely coming on all mankind: … on the holy mountains, as well as on the unclean ones; … The holy mountains of Zion will rejoice, while those on which are the altars of the Baal, will totter.

(3) He presents to us the following bitter and cruel portrait of the opposing army, concerning the number of warriors, as well as their might and activity:

a- *"**A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will their ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations**"* **(Joel 2: 2).**

b- God, with His longsuffering, waits and waits …; But will eventually, for the sake of His love, and because of our lack of response, He will have to chasten, although He may seem cruel and harsh. It is His compassionate fatherhood for the sake of the salvation of the soul, rebelliously consistent on her sins.

c- It does not stop at the great number, but: *"**Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run; with a noise like chariots, over mountaintops they leap**"* **(Joel 2: 4, 5).** He terrifies our eyes by their appearance; and our ears by their noise. The eyes that became slothful in their spiritual strife, will become terrified by the divine chastisement; seeing it like swift steeds, and like leaping horsemen; … There is no time for slothfulness; … Its noise is horrible and very terrifying, like that of unstoppable chariots over mountain-tops!

d- Chastisement would expose the work of the sin in us; turning our inner paradise into a wilderness: *"A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; The land*

is like the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them" (Joel 2: 3)

This fiery invasion, although in its depth is a divine chastisement, Yet it is a natural fruit of the work of sin, the deadly fire, Whoever practices it would be embracing a fire that burns him. Nothing could overcome that fire, except the fire of the Holy

Spirit, who turns the desolate wilderness into a joyful paradise. By the fire of the Holy Spirit, the fire of sin is destroyed; And by the fruit of the Spirit, the heart would return to its former condition, to become the joyful paradise of God; and the believer would then praise his Savior, saying: "*Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits"* (Song 4: 16).

If this is the book of the day of the lord, horrible to the wicked, whose paradise has turned into a wilderness; It is, at the same time, the book of the pouring of the Holy Spirit over mankind, Who will give us back our nature, a paradise for God, instead of the wilderness that we have become. That is why **St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa** addresses the Catechumens, saying: [You were, O Catechumens, outside the paradise, sharing with your father Adam his exile; But now, the door is open for you to go back to where you have been[1]].

If the prophet sees in the sin, "*a flaming fire that devours the stubble"* (5); The fiery Holy Spirit would turn the ashes into a holy temple for the Lord. **St. Cyril the Great** says: [The one baptized gets the Holy Spirit in him, to turn actually into a temple of God[2]].

e- Concerning the plan, it is extremely elaborate: "***They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. And when they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down"*** **(Joel 2: 7, 8)**

The prophet watching the attacks of the locusts utterly covering the land, to devour everything green; Then coming into houses through windows; with nothing to stop them; He notices how every individual locust has her designated task, how it does not cut down its fellow locust; and how it moves only within the range allowed to her by God. It was not a haphazard natural catastrophe, but it bore an accurate goal, both in its wholeness, or in its details.

The same thing happens against Judah with the attack of the enemy. The devastation that would place is not without goal, but everything is elaborately planned beforehand. The plan is executed, with every fighter occupying his designated location; And in case he falls among the ranks, he would not be cut off until he realizes his goal.

f- As long as everybody sinned, nobody would escape chastisement; If the locusts attack the exposed green fields, to turn them Into wilderness; they also infiltrate through the windows into the houses in cities; Nothing would stop them, or escape from them. The fruit of the sin would follow him wherever he is, even inside his secret place, surrounded by secure walls.

g- He would bear the bitterness of bitter that no one can endure: "***The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is***

[1] *PG 46: 416 C.*
[2] *In Joan S. 2.*

very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?!" **(Joel 2: 10, 11)**

These are the signs provided by the Lord Christ Himself for His ultimate coming; very terrible signs for the wicked sinners.

God allows for nature to shake and tremble before the eyes of sinners, so that when they realize the extent of what sin would do to nature; they may prepare themselves by repentance to encounter God.

It is amazing how God considers the opponent army, as "His army"; Having Himself allowed it to chasten His people; to become the rod of chastisement; Yet for a certain time!

The fathers have symbolic spiritual concepts for the quaking of the earth, the trembling of heaven, the darkness of the sun and the moon, and the falling down of the stars … to which we shall return, if God allows us to live, to discuss in more detail in our commentary on the gospel of Matthew. (chapter24) We shall mention here only certain quotations.

- Now is the end of every mortal life; And according to the words of the prophet: The form of this present world will go away, to be followed by a new world; And in place of the seen stars, Christ Himself will shine, being the Sun and the King of the New creation. How great will be that Sun, and how great would be His splendor! The sun, the moon, and the stars that shine now would darken before such a great light!

  (Josabius the Caesarean)[1]

- Like the sun and the stars when they quickly diminish their brightness once the sun rises; So it will be when the Lord Christ comes; The sun darkens; the moon will stop giving its brightness; and the stars of heaven would fall from the sky. Their past splendor will be taken away, to be given a new greater light.

  (St. John Chrysostom [2]

The quaking earth is the human body that weakens and grow frailer because of the abominations committed by man, for the sake of the pleasure and comfort of his body. While assuming that he is giving it comfort, he is unconsciously terrifying it.

Heaven, on the other hand, refers to the soul, which was meant to be a center of the kingdom of God, and His dwelling place, … It would loses her security and peace through the sin, and tremble. The heavenly lights would stop giving their brightness, as a sign of the loss of the loss of the spiritual insight, and of the entrance into a state of spiritual confusion. So the divine chastisement proclaims the fruit of our fruit of our sins; exposes it in us that we do not endure His horrible day.

"*The men of Beth Shemesh (previously) said, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall (the ark of the Lord) go up from us?'"* (1 Samuel 6: 20); And the Psalmist *says: "You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence, when once You are angry?*

You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still. When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed of the earth" (Psalm 76: 7-9).

2. A CALL TO REPENTANCE:

[1] *Catena of Creek Frs. (Luke 21).*
[2] *Excerpta in Secund Adv.*

Revealing by His chastisements, the activity of the sin in the soul and the body, God opens the doors of hope wide before His people, so that no one would fall in despair; proclaiming:

"Now, therefore, says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your hearts and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him – a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?" **(Joel 2: 12-14)**

In this call He proclaims the following:

a- Repentance, in its essence, is **'a return to God'** … It is not merely a remorse on sin, or a forsake of iniquity, But, positively, it is a return to the divine bosoms, to give God the face and not the back … That is why God confirms His personal features in His relationship with us, … that He is *"gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness"*

And as said by **St. Cyprian**: [God can forgive and show compassion to the sinner, who works on seeking mercy[1]]. He used every possible means to express His love for man, and His compassion toward him, to make him return to Him, to find in Him the divine bosoms that never close before those who return.

And **St. Ambrose** says: [I wish no one fears perdition, whatever his abominations are, and however severe his fall may be; As the good Samaritan of the gospel will eventually pass by, to find him coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho; namely, fleeing from the passions of martyrdom, to the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world; wounded, between life and death by the robbers. That good Samaritan, a symbol of the Lord Christ, the Guard over the Spirits, will never forsake you, will have compassion on you and will heal you[2]].

If it is God who allows for chastisement – which we consider as evil – Once we return to him, *"He will relent from doing it"*.

And as **father Theodoret** says: [The Holy Book often uses some expressions, not according to their original meaning; like, for example using the word 'evil' to express 'sorrows and anguish'; not that they are evils, or of evil nature; But as those on whom they dwell for their own benefit, may consider them as such. When God talks to humans, He so does according to their own language and human feelings[3]].

b- The return should be with the whole heart: There are many who return to God at times of anguish, but not with their whole heart; And once the anguish is lifted up, they would soon go back to their previous evil ways, and probably to worse; Like the Case with the Pharaoh of Egypt who called Moses and Aaron, and asked them to pray for him and for his people; promising to let the children of Israel go to sacrifice to the Lord (Exodus 8: 8). *"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he Hardened his heart, and would not listen to them, just as the Lord has said"* (Exodus 8: 15).

Therefore, let our return to the Lord be from our whole heart; together with fasting, weeping, and even wailing …. As though our body shares with our soul, her return to God; proclaiming it by praying, fasting, and tears.

---

[1] *Treat. 3: 36.*

[2] ترفقوا بالخطاة: القديس أمبروسيوس 1968، ص 32.

[3] *Cassian: Conf. 6: 6.*

About this, **St. Ambrose** says: [I wish those who repent, know how to do it; … by what zeal, and by what feelings; …How it should swallow all his thoughts, shake his inner body, and pierce the depths of his heart!

According to the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *"See, O Lord, that I am in distress; My soul is troubled; My heart is overturned within me"* (Lamentation1: 20);

Who also says: *"The elders of the daughter of Zion, sit on the ground and keep silence; They throw dust on their heads and gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem bow their heads to the ground. My eyes fail with tears, My heart is troubled, My bile is poured on the ground, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people"* (Lamentation 2: 10, 11).

Likewise, when the people of Nineveh grieved, they were spared of the perdition of their city (Jonah 3: 5).

How powerful is the activity of this medicine of repentance! It may even look as though it can change the intention of God!].

[Reveal your wounds to the sivine Physician, that he may heal you … Cleanse your wounds with tears!; the way the woman, mentioned in the gospel did, who, through washing the feet of the Savior with her tears, she washed away, and wiped out the awful smell of her sins[1]].

Repentance should not stop at the outer appearance; But should also touch the whole inner heart; … *"**Rend your hearts, and not your garments**"*. And as **St. Cyprian** says: [I beseech everyone of you, dear brethren, to confess the sins he *committed* in this world … Let us return to the Lord with our whole hearts; … Let us express our repentance by real grief; ,,, Let us supplicate to God's mercy; … Let our souls bow before Him; … Let our grief intercede before Him; … Let all our hope be in Him ; … So let us return to the Lord with our whole heart; … Let us quench the fire of His wrath by fasting, weeping, and grief; the way He, Himself, instructed us to do[2]].

c- Saying: *"He may probably relent"*, does not imply that He is not sure, But it is a sign that we should stand before the Lord in humility and with contrition, seeking His mercy; As, in our repentance, He seeks humility; *"The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart – These, O god, You shall not despise"* (Psalm 51: 17).

Relenting does not imply that God would change His mind; But it carries the meaning of love; … the way a father, while firmly chastening his son, pretends to be cruel, with the hope that his son may return to him, and he would then return to his son.

Even in the moments of his firmness, God does not endure the tears of his son. A sign of relenting is that, instead of anger, His chastisement would end up with a blessing; And He would accept from His son a grain offering and a drink offering, a sign of his pleasure with him and of receiving him. *"**Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him**"* (14).

d- Repentance should be practiced by the whole congregation, including the elders, the infants, the suckling, the newly married, the priests, and the ministers of the Lord. As long as the sin extended to all, It would be fitting for all to partake of it; The whole building should support itself in the life of repentance.

---

[1] ترفقوا بالخطاة: ص 50، 51، 56.

[2] للمؤلف: الحب الإلهي، ص 51.

The prophet Jeremiah telling us about what the sin has done, even to the infants, says: "*The tongue of the infants clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst; The young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them"* (Lamentation 4: 4)… And in God's mercy, the infants of Nineveh, having their special consideration with Him, He says: "*And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their Left, and also much livestock"* (Jonah 4: 11).

e- The priests, whose main job is to minister to the Lord through the altar; namely, through the slain Christ, through perpetual prayers and intercessions on behalf of the people, should also partake of the people's repentance "*Let the priests who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, '**Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach. That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"* **(Joel 2: 17)**

3. GOD WILL PITY HIS PEOPLE:

*"**Then God will be zealous for His land, And pity his people**"* **(Joel 2: 18).**

The sufferings that God allows, are for the sake of His zeal for His holy land; namely His people, beloved to Him, and his pity on them.

While chastening His children, He asks them to look at Him, not as an avenging Judge, but as a loving Father, who longs to have joy in them, and to get pleasure in their love for Him. The signs of His love are:

a- When the soul enters into a state of hunger, thirst, and sickness, because of sin; God in His love, presents Himself to her, as food, drink, and spiritual medicine; saying: *"**Behold, I will send you grain, new wine, and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations"*** **(Joel 2: 19).** She will no longer seek from the nations – namely the world – to fulfill her emotion, to soothe her feelings, or to bandage her wounds, But she will find in her Groom all her needs.

St. John Saba praises God, the source of true fulfillment, saying:

[Blessed is he, who forgot the talk of the world by Your talk to him; As by You, all his needs are consummated!

You are his food and drink!

You are his abode, and the dwelling place of his comfort; To you, he will always resort to be covered!

You are his Sun and his daylight; By Your light, he can see the hidden things!

You are the Father; His Father!

In him, You have given the Spirit of Your Son; And this Spirit gave him the daring to seek from You everything; the way a son seeks from his father! With You, he talks all the time; As he knows no other father but You[1]].

b- Having realized the goal of His chastisement, when His people return to Him; God judges the opponent people, whom He used as a tool of His chastisement …. Why? Because they have fallen into pride, arrogance, and haughtiness; according to the words of the prophet: "*It shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks"* (Isaiah 10: 12).

[1] *Treat. 3: 29.*

Because, in his arrogance, the enemy thought that he is mighty, and did not realize that God was using him to chasten His people; God will humiliate him:

"But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea, and his back toward the western sea. His stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, Because he has done monstrous things" **(Joel 2: 20)**

Therefore, because he has fallen into arrogance and haughtiness, God cuts him off to destroy his (face) in the waters of the Dead Sea, and his (back) in the Great Sea to the west; that the two would never come together again. His stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise everywhere; According to the words of the prophet Isaiah: *"For he says: 'By the strength of my hand, I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasuries; So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man… Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts will send leanness among his fat ones, and under his glory He will kindle a burning, like the burning of a fire. So the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; It will burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field (both soul and body)'"* (Isaiah 10: 13-18).

c- The Lord shall cleanse the previous wounds of His people, and turn their sorrow that prevailed on them because of the sin, into gladness and rejoice.

"Fear not, O land, Be glad and rejoice, For the lord has done marvelous things" (Joel 2: 21)

d- Sanctifying all their energies and talents by the Holy Spirit; saying: ***"Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field, for the open pastures are springing up, and the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the lord your God, For He has given you the for you – the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month"*** **(Joel 2: 22, 23)**

The Messianic era in the minds of the prophets was often connected to the holy waters (Ezekiel 36: 26; Isaiah 30: 23; Jeremiah 31:9; Zechariah 13: 1, 2; Psalm 46: 4, etc.); Water that would turn the wilderness into fertile land, would fulfill the believers like the trees of the paradise of God; would take away the filth, would purify the land of idol-worship; and would present life and sanctification[1].

What is the early and the latter rain, but the Holy Spirit who waters the thirsty wilderness of the soul and, let the trees bear their

fruits; the fig tree and the vine give their strength?! It is the Holy Spirit who worked in the old as an early rain; But who has rather settled in us after the ascension of the Lord, to turn our inner wilderness into a joyful paradise.

The prophet says: *"**Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field, for the open pastures are springing up**"* (22). If the body, because of sin, has become like beasts of the field, with no pastures; The Holy Spirit will sanctify the body and will fulfill all its energies and feelings, for edification. He does not destroy the beasts of the field, nor despise them, but would sanctify them, and fulfill them with what are the Lord's. That is why He requests from the children of Zion to be glad and rejoice because of that heavenly rain. It is as though the prophet proclaims through the shadow, what the Lord will later proclaim to His disciples: *"I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go*

[1] للمؤلف: الروح القدس بين الميلاد الجديد... ص 49.

away, for If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; But if Idepart, I will send Him to you" (John 16: 7).

This is the "rain" that the Lord Christ has promised to send to His disciples from the Father, as a sign of His love and His care for them. And as it came in the proverbs: "*In the light of the King's face is life; And his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain"* (Proverbs 16: 15). And as the prophet Hosea says: "*His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth"* (Hosea 6: 3). And the prophet Zechariah asks us to seek that latter rain to *work in our life:* "Ask the Lord for rain, In the time of the latter rain, the Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone" (Zechariah 10: 1). That is the great gift of God: "*Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves to us the appointed weeks of the harvest"* (Jeremiah 5: 24).

The Lord Christ has given us this latter rain in its season, for our souls to get fulfilled by the Lord, to praise Him, and to realize His dwelling in their midst; Namely, granted them the spiritual fulfillment, the life of praise, and the feeling of the divine presence; Saying: ***"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wonderfully with you, And My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame"*** **(Joel 2: 26, 27)**

Having come out hungry of paradise, the whole world would not be able to satisfy man's heart, his feelings, or his mind … And He would so remain like a fugitive on earth, in great hunger, until God would fill him with His fulfilling Holy Spirit.

This fulfillment provides praise; that man becomes like a suckling infant rejoicing in his mother; all his feelings shaking, and all his body members responding to his joy, to produce a praise of true love, that the tongue is unable to express. Praise is not mere words we sing, or tunes we learn; But in its depth, it is a state of true joy that shakes the whole being of the believer, both physically and spiritually, to let his tongue set forth to praise, his heart to dance, and his soul to shake with heavenly angelic tunes.

Being connected to the believer's realization that the Lord dwells in him; the believer praises and rejoices, not for the sake of gifts given to him, even if they are spiritual, but for the sake of the divine Giver Himself!

These are the signs of God's fatherly love for His people: That He fulfills the soul, waters it, bandages her wounds, gives back her glory in Him, takes away the reproach of sin and iniquity; sanctifies all her energies, and talents to His account; and proclaims

His dwelling in her midst, as the secret of her fulfillment, and her spiritual praise!

The blessings of His love for His people could be summarized as follows:

A-He would have pity on them; namely would have compassion on them (18).

B-He would respond to them and listen to them (19)

C-He would satisfy their needs, and would grant them spiritual fulfillment (19).

D-He would take away their reproach (19); and would grant them glory.

E-He would drive away their enemies, and would destroy their pride (20).

F-He would take away their fear and worries (21).

G-He would grant them gladness and joy (21)

H-He would even care for their beasts (22).

I-He would bless the fruits of their lands (22)

J-He would grant them rain, both the former and the latter (23) – the gift of the Holy Spirit.

K-He would restore to them the years that the swarming locusts has eaten (25).

L-He would grant them the spirit of praise and the living spiritual worship (26)

M-He would proclaim His wonders in their life, to become themselves wonders (26).

N-He would proclaim His dwelling in their midst (27).

O-He would grant them His Holy Spirit (28).

4. AN ULTIMATE REFORM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Having compassion on His people, and zeal for His heritage; He does not deny them anything, He even grants them Himself. He gives them His Holy Spirit in them, as the secret of their ultimate inner change; saying: ***"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams; Your young men shall see visions; And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in these days"*** **(Joel 2: 28, 29)**

It is the greatest gift that God gave humanity, after preparing for it by presenting the sacrifice of redemption on the cross. The gift that the church has enjoyed on the day of the Pentecost, as proclaimed by the apostle Peter (Acts 2: 14-21); and was presented to every man who approaches God; … The gift of God to the sons and daughters; namely, on one aspect, with no discrimination between sexes, and on another, is given even to those with little experience; … It is the free gift from God to every one who receives!

It is the gift of God to the elders whose life grew fat and felt loss, to turn their spiritual aging into youth renewed in the Lord, filled with hope and joy.

It is the gift of God to the menservants and the maidservants; Given to those who feel like slaves, to set them free, granting them the spirit of sonhood.

It is the gift of God to all mankind … Namely to everyone who receives it!

As to the work of the Holy Spirit in us; It is enough to mention the words of St. Basil the Great:

[By the Holy Spirit we have:

Restoration of our dwelling place in paradise;

Our ascension to the kingdom of heaven;

Getting back our divine sonhood;

Our daring to call God "Our Father";

Our partaking of the grace of Christ;

Our being called the children of light;

And in few words, being granted the fullness of blessing in this age, and the age to come[1]].

Commenting on the phrase *"I will pour out My Spirit"*, **St. Ambrose** says: [He does not say: 'I will pour the Spirit', but says: *"I will pour **My Spirit**";* As we cannot receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but receive of Him, according to His will (Philippians 2: 6)[2]. But that does Not mean that the whole Spirit would not dwell in us;

[1] *De spir. Sanc. 15: 35.*

[2] *Of The Goly Spirit 8: 92.*

Or that we get a part of Him! As **St. Clement of Alexandria**[1] warns us against dividing The Spirit! It is the secret of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit working in us according to the will of God for our edification, in an exalted divine way.

This gift is accompanied by: "***I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fires, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord*" (Joel 30, 31).** It is as though, the goal of this great gift is to set forth with the church to the great day of the Lord; When she sees how the heaven and earth would go away; how the light of the world be quenched, and yet how everything divine would remain; her heart would flare toward the union with the only eternal God.

Finally, he ends his prophecy about the Holy Spirit, by a proclamation that all who come to Him from the nations will be accepted; saying:

"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved" (Joel 2: 32)

God will open up His arms to whoever calls on His name, whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, according to the words of the apostle Paul:

"*Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10: 11-13); And according to the apostle Peter: "*For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, , as many as the Lord our God will call"* (Acts 2: 39).

St. Augustine says: [The name of the Creator of heaven and earth was before called only among the Israelites; while the rest of the Gentiles called the deaf and the mute idols; or called the devils that hear what would harm them[2]]. But now, the Gentiles are calling the name of the living God, by the Holy Spirit.

[1] *Strom. 5: 13.*
[2] *Ser. On N. T. 6: 1.*

AN INSPIRATION FRP THE BOOK OF JOEL 2
AMID YOUR CHASTISEMENT, I FEEL YOUR PITY AND COMPASSION

- You allowed for the four locust attacks to chasten Your people.
  And having not benefited from them, You allowed for that of the Babylonians.
  Yet in all that, You are amazing in Your love!
  You have pity on Your people!
  Amid Your chastisements, I feel Your pity and Your compassion.

- Amid Your chastisements, and in Your day of gloominess.
  Yet I feel that You are beyond that cloud.
  Soon that cloud will scatter, and You will shine with Your splendor.
  Allow me to behold Your light amid my sufferings.

- Show me how mild You are in Your love and compassion.
  That to You I shall return, not through rending my garment, but through the contrition of my heart.
  Against You, You only, have I sinned.
  To You I reveal the wounds of my soul, O the heavenly Physician.
  Heal me, that I be healed!
  Fill all the void of my heart by Your love.
  Send Your Holy Spirit to work in my depths.
  To turn my inner wilderness into a heavenly paradise.
  How mild You are in Your love, even during the moments you chasten me.

CHAPTER 3
THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD

The prophet Joel set forth from the talk about the divine chastisement to the talk about the great day of the Lord; during which God will be glorified through breaking down the pride of the nations, and honoring His children who responded to His fatherly chastisement; presenting them with eternal gifts.

1- Judging the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat 1 - 8
2- The Lord will be a shelter to His people 9 – 17
3- The eternal gifts of God 18 – 21

1. JUDGING THE NATIONS IN THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT:

In order for the repentance to become active in the life of the church, and in that of every member in her, we are committed to anticipate the day of the Lord as being near at hand; … To see in it the present chastisements, although bitter and sorrowful, yet they are of benefit for our edification; … To see the appearance of the Lord for the sake of our eternal salvation, and for the punishment of the wicked; … And those falling under chastisement to see that their glory is soon to come; and the reproach of the devil actually realized. The prophet says:

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy in exchange for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink'" **(Joel 3: 1-3)**

The judgment will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which means in Hebrew 'The Valley of Jehovah who judges or condemns', or 'The Valley of Judgment' … The location of this valley is not accurately known; But men of the fourth century believed that it is the 'Valley of Cedron', east of Jerusalem, facing the mount of Olives to the west; While others believe that it is the 'Valley of Goz', north of Jerusalem; Or the 'Valley of Rababah' south of the city.

Why did He choose the 'Valley of Jehoshaphat' for judgment?

a- It was chosen for the sake of its symbolic meaning; As it is Jehovah Himself who is the Judge; on account of that He searches the heart and the mind.

b- Being a valley close to Jerusalem, it is a convenient location where all would be gathered, For God to judge the wicked according to their works; and to enter, together with His children, into the High Jerusalem, whose glory, the wicked would be denied to see. The judgment would not be in Jerusalem, where nothing unclean or defiled would enter; As it is where God dwells together with His saints (Revelation 21: 3).

c- The Valley of Jehoshaphat reminds us of what happened to the nations that attacked Judah (2 Chronicles 20), whom the Lord destroyed at the same location where they gathered together to attack His children; As though the criminal has to be judged in the same place where he committed his crime. The promise of the Lord to king Jehoshaphat and his people, who cried out to him with humility and fasting: *"Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's … Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord…. So when Judah came to a place*

overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth, no one had escaped" (2 Chronicles 20: 24).

Yes, our adversaries may indeed be a multitude, and, according to the apostle Paul: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6: 12). Yet we enjoy a power against the devil and his hosts – that of the cross, that would destroy their evil: "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Coloassians 2: 15).

That is the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where Christ was outside the camp, outside Jerusalem, destroying the evil enemy by His cross, to bring us back to His eternal Kingdom! It is a judgment realized by the cross; whose activity would endure in the life of everyone who unites with the Crucified, until he encounters the Lord face to face on His great day of judgment.

That is why the apostle Paul provokes us, saying: "Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrew 13: 14). It is a call to go forth to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, outside Jerusalem, bearing the cross of the Lord, to see with our own eyes the defeat of the devil and his works being realized every day in our life; setting forth to our everlasting city.

Let us then go forth to the Valley of Jehoshaphat to see the Lord judging for our sake against the devil and his seductions and threats; In order to get in touch with what the prophet Isaiah has proclaimed, saying: *"For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the sake of Zion"* ; *"For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come"* (Isaiah 63: 4). That day of vengeance has come and has actually been realized when the Lord was lifted on the cross, drawing Zion up with Him out of Hades, destroying the powers of evil underneath His feet. That day wuld endure all our life, as long as the sacrifice of the cross was not corrupted, nor overcome by Hades. And once the plan of the Lord is consummated toward all the elect, He will appear to us face to face; while the devil will also appear, yet bound in the pit.

In this chapter, God demonstrated His great day in three aspects:

(1) Glorifying the name of God, that was insulted by the nations through attacking His children; saying: *"So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain"* (17). On the day of judgment, God will be glorified, who saved His children from the captivity of the devil, proclaiming His eternal dwelling in their midst; According to the words of St. John: *"I heard a loud voice from* heaven saying: 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21: 3).

(2) Submitting the pride of nations; according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: "*Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with* it? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, Or as if a staff could lift up, as if it were not wood!" (Isaiah 10: 15).

Because the nations that God used to chasten His people, thought that they were greater than Him who allowed them to chasten; and because they boasted and felt haughty against God the Truth; Once the goal behind using them was realized, God

would pay them back for their evil deeds: *"For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head"* (Obadiah 15). That is why the day of the Lord was called: 'a day of destruction': "*Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty"*(Isaiah 13: 6). It also called 'A day of vengeance': "*For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, A day of vengeance, That He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood"* (Jeremiah 46: 10). It is also called 'A day of anger': "*Before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you"* (Zephaniah 2: 2).

(3) The consummation of the liberation of the people of God, who for long have fallen in bondage, and became the laughingstock of the nations. He says: "*When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem"* (1); He is the One who allows for us to fall under chastisement, even to bondage; Then if we willingly receive it, He would send us help to set us free; like He did when He sent Moses to Pharaoh, to say to him: "*Let my son go, that he may worship Me"* (Exodus 4: 23).

God looked to find His sons and daughters sold to the Greeks; giving a boy in exchange for a harlot; and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink (3; 6). How hard it is for God to see His heritage, His own, His portion, and His treasure, scattered cheaply by the enemy! That is why He sets forth to liberate them, saying to the enemy:

***"Swiftly and speedily I shall return your retaliation upon your own head; Because you have taken My silver and My gold, And have carried into your temples My prized possessions. Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from the borders … I will sell your sons and daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; For the Lord has spoken"* (Joel 3: 4-8)**

What are the silver, the gold, or the prized possessions, carried by the enemy into their temples, but the precious souls of God's sons and daughters, counted in His eyes as His treasure; taken by the enemy to the account of a foreign adversary temple; which is that of the love of the world, and the enjoyment of the defiled carnal pleasures?! God's children were sold to strangers, to become slaves to several sins, as though under the authority of Pharaoh and his men. But the Lord all the time confirms His work of salvation by the cross for the sake of the souls of His servants, saying: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles'wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed , the whole earth is Mine, but you shall be for Me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exodus 19: 4-6). It was also said: "The Lord's own portion was His people, Jacob His allotted share" (Deuteronomy 32: 9). He works to the account of His people, His portion, to liberate them completely, to make out of them a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwell (2 Peter 3: 10-13); and on which no enemy can anymore come.

We have received from God His silver; namely, His living word "*purified seven times"* (Psalm 12: 6), and His gold; namely, the heavenly feature; And were given the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the good treasures, which we should never bring except into the temple of the Lord, but walk faithfully in what He granted us, to enjoy more after enjoying the repentance. Bearing the good treasures of the Lord into evil temples, is like when someone uses the features of love granted to him by God in the lusts of his body;

Or when he misuses the love of others for him, because of his spiritual or religious knowledge in a way other than that of God.

Finally, What does God means by saying: ***"I will sell your sons and daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sebeans?"*** **(8)**. He probably means by that what happened in the days of the 'Maccabees' who overcame the enemies; Or He means the judgment of the world by the saints; according to the words said by the apostle: *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"* (1 Corinthians 6: 2); Denied the glory, the wicked will be judged by the saints who gained the eternal freedom through their true repentance in the Lord.

2. THE LORD WILL BE A SHELTER TO HIS PEOPLE:

After declaring the great day of the Lord, in which God will be glorified through the liberation of His children from the authority of evil, he proclaims that the secret of the conquest is not in man himself, but in God who is his shelter.

He starts by ridiculing the nations that leaned upon themselves, and upon their possibilities, then reveals their weakness before God who supports His children, granting them the conquest; … Mockingly, He says: ***"Proclaim this among the nations: 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, Let all the men of war draw near, Let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say: 'I am strong'"*** **(Joel 3: 9, 10)**

They are fighting with all their energies, calling on all their mighty men, and dedicating all their possibilities; Yet they will only destroy themselves; according to the words of the prophet: *"Be shattered, O You people, and be broken in pieces! … Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing, Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us"* (Isaiah 8: 9, 10).

Mockingly he tells them: *"Let the weak say, '**I am strong'**"* (10). Satan has, for a long time assumed that he is an unbeatable hero, until he entered into battle with the Lord Himself on the cross, when he finally realized how helplessly weak he actually is!

Several fathers believe that the Lord's words, saying: *"Let the weak say: 'I am strong'", a*re addressed to every believer, who sees himself as weak, to make him say "I am strong!" in the Lord, my shelter. And as **father 'Serinos'** says: [Listen to what the King (the Lord) Himself says, calling the mighty men to the spiritual war against sin; saying to them: "Let the weak say: 'I am strong', and the one, who suffers: 'I am a wrestler'"; … As no one fights in the Lord's battle, but the weak; … For, *"My strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12: 9)[1].

If we are weak before Satan; By the Lord, we are strong and heroes! And as **St. John Chrysostom** wrote to his friend, the fallen monk, saying: [If Satan has the ability to cast you, from such a mighty height, and an exalted virtue, down to the farthest limits of evil; How much more would be the Lord's ability, not only to lift you up back to your original confidence; But to make you far better than you used to be?!]. [If Satan has cast us down to the ground; It is up to us to stand up, and to keep ourselves from falling again; So as not to add to his conquests on us, more of our own doing[2]].

Therefore, I wish we do not become terrified before the devil, even when he appears as a multitude of strong adversaries; For he is utterly weak before God who

---

[1] *Cassian: Conf 7: 5.*

[2] رسالة إلى ساقط يائس، 1964، ص 7، 38.

dwells in us; according to the words of the prophet: ***"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The Lord also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the Lord will be a shelter for his people, And the strength of the children of Israel"*** **(Joel 3: 14-16)**

If the nations have become like a sun, a moon, or even like stars in the world, Yet, before God – the Sun of Righteousness – they will grow dark, and will diminish their false brightness!

The Lord Himself will stand as a Lion coming from the tribe of Judah, to protect His children, and to shelter them in His stronghold; He will roar on the sin, will make it shake, and will keep it from dwelling in your soul (the heaven), or in your body (the earth).

St. (Mar) Ephram the Syrian speaking to us about God as our shelter, says: [Let God be your Shelter … If His providence does not forsake you, nothing will harm you. Do not fear the enemies who may fiercely charge against you; As God will keep your soul, and will turn the harmful things into things of benefit[1]].

The sign of conquest in the Lord, is that, while we resort to Him as a stronghold for our souls, He proclaims Himself in us, And would never allow a stranger to reign in Jerusalem, His holy mountain; … *"No alien shall ever pass through her again"* (17).

3. THE ETERNAL GIFTS OF GOD:

Our conquest by the Lord will be proclaimed by His dwelling alone in us; reigning on our hearts; and not allowing an alien to pass through His kingdom … The land and its fullness will become for God and His Messiah; … This divine presence will proclaim itself through the abundance of fruits that appear in us, and the fountains of the Spirit that flow within us.

"And it will come to pass in that day, That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord, and water the valley of Acacias (Wadi Shittim)" **(Joel 3: 18)**

What are these mountains, hills, fountains, and the house of the Lord, but the sides of the victorious church, where the Lord dwells, the Grantor of conquest, who makes out of His children: Mountains holy for Him, that drip with new wine for the mature; … Living hills that flow with milk for the infants; … Fountains that would never dry up, to which everyone would resort; … And a house of the Lord that brings gladness to the heavenly creatures?!

By the new wine, He probably also refers to the Holy Spirit, Who would make the soul drunk with the love of God, and fill her with eternal joy. The mountains refer to the laborers in the vine of the Lord; For the mature, this divine Spirit would be as a spiritual wine that brings them joy; … For the infants, as milk that feed and support them; … And for every creature that thirsts to it, would be as living water that quenches its thirst. The Lord Christ Himself says: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7: 37, 38).

---

[1] ارشادات ونصائح للقديس مار افرام السرياني، 19.

By the fountain that flows from the house of the Lord, to water the Valley of Acacia, or the Valley of Shittim, He refers to the fountain of baptism seen by the prophet Ezekiel, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar; that waters many trees on one side and the other; healing waters; in which a great multitude of fish live (Ezekiel 47). … It is the fountain of baptism that flows on the barren and fruitless Valley of Acacia, where nothing but Acacia trees used to grow …; Baptism would transform it into a fertile valley where all kinds of fruitful trees grow! … That is the river which flowed with its four branches over the nations in every direction of the world, where God would set His living paradise, In place of the barren Valley of Acacia, or wadi Shittim, which starts north-west of Jerusalem, and goes down to the east of the city, separating it from the Mount of Olives, then goes further down toward the south-east toward the Dead Sea; where the Valley of Fire, (or Wadi-el-Nar) is today.

Anyway, the prophet Joel ends his prophecy by proclaiming the abundance of God's work in His church, not only on the positive aspect of flowing wine, milk, and living water; But also on the negative aspect, of destroying the works of the old man, symbolized here by Egypt (the love of the world) that captivates man; Like Pharaoh who put the people of God in bondage; And by Edom (the love of blood shedding and oppression) … He prepares His church for the great day of the Lord, to join Him in His eternal glory.

In this chapter, the prophet Joel presents to us the following divine blessings:

The enemies will be driven away, and will end up in perdition	(1-15).
Jerusalem will be saved	(16, 17).
The land will be blessed	(18).
Judah will be renewed	(19 – 21).

This is the work of God in us, He will destroy the enemy underneath our feet; Will save our inner Jerusalem, His holy temple; Will bless our land; namely our body; And will proclaim the kingdom of the One who comes out of the tribe of Judah in our depths.

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE BOOK OF JOEL 3
YOUR DAY IS THE DAY OF FREEDOM

- You allowed for Your people to be chastised.
  You allowed them to be captivated to Babylon.
  But You soon punished the violent and fierce Babylon.
  You turned Your day into a day of freedom and joy.
- Judge, O Lord, my sin that captivated me into humility.
  But, my soul, beloved to You, Set her free by Your right hand.
- I confess that I have corrupted Your gifts to me.
  I turned all my energies, emotions, and my possibilities to evil.
  Sanctify my life.
  Renew my depths.
  Bring all my energies back to Your kingdom.
- I confess to You that I am a captive to sin.
  I am weak, I am despised.
  But by You I shall become strong.
  By Your cross, I shall break the chains of the enemy, and set myself free.
  The day of Your crucifixion is the day of proclamation of my freedom.