

New wine in Joel

by Douglas E. Cox

Joel described an invading army which has devastated the land. They have teeth of lions.

Joel 1:5-6

Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

The invading armies of Joel 1 & 2, the hordes of Gog & Magog in Ezekiel 38-39, the horses of the second woe in Revelation 9, all depict the same thing: multitudes of nominal Christians. Joel's prophecy describes the spiritual desolation of the Church, with figures derived from the produce of the land. They are the effects of either the ravages of an invading horde of locusts, or a lengthy period of drought, or fire, or all of these.

Joel 1:7

He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

Joel listed the following things that were affected by the invaders or by the drought: wine, and new wine were scarce; the field, the corn, and "the oil languisheth;" wheat, barley, "the harvest of the field is perished;" "the vine is dried up," "the fig tree languisheth," the pomegranate tree, the palm tree, the apple tree, and "all the trees of the field are withered;" "the meat offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of God," "joy and gladness are cut off from God's house;" "the seed is rotten under the clods," "the garners are broken down," "corn is withered,"

“the beasts groan,” “herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture,” “flocks of sheep are desolate;” “the pastures have been devoured by fire,” “the trees of the field are burned;” “the rivers of water are dried up.”

In other Scriptures, many of these are symbols of things pertaining to the Gospel.

Joel 1:9

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord’s ministers, mourn.

Jesus spoke of his teaching as ‘new wine.’ It was new wine because he interpreted Scripture in new ways, producing a new flavour in it, making it more desirable and satisfying. Jesus said:

Mark 2:22

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Fermentation during wine-making changes the ingredients, and so wine-making is employed as a figure for interpreting prophecy. Just as wine differs from the ingredients used to make it, the results of interpretation may differ from the original words of a prophecy, as many examples in Scripture demonstrate.

Joel 1:11

Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

Traditionally, the harvest metaphor applies to preaching the Gospel. Those who believe are the sheaves of wheat.

Psalms 126:5-6

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Jesus also referred to the harvest in this sense.

Matthew 9:37-38

Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Jesus interpreted the harvest in his parable of the tares in the context of the resurrection of the saints, and the judgment.

Matthew 13:36-43

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

This harvest is also described in Rev. 14.

Revelation 14:14-16

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Joel described vines and fruit trees in distress.

Joel 1:12

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

Jesus identified himself as the vine, and believers as branches.

John 5:1-5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Jesus identified men with trees, and he said we can distinguish good trees from evil by their fruit.

Matthew 7:15-18 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather

grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Joel described the seed rotting in the ground, barns broken down, and crops withered, a scene of desolation.

Joel 1:17

The seed is rotten under their clods, the garnerers are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

When the seed rots under the clods, the message of the Gospel fails to bring forth its intended fruit.

In Jesus' parable of the sower in Matthew 13, the seed is the word of the Gospel, which falls in different kinds of places. "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." [Matthew 13:23]

Joel wrote:

Joel 1:18

How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

In the parable of Ezekiel 34, sheep represent God's people, who are scattered over the face of the earth. God searches for them.

Ezekiel 34:6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Ezekiel 34:11-12

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Ezekiel 34:31

And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.

Joel wrote:

Joel 1:19

O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

The pastures represent the spiritual nourishment of the saints, who are depicted as sheep.

Psalm 23:2

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Ezekiel 34:14

I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

The first psalm compares the righteous man to a tree:

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Joel then describes a great army of people. The army of Joel 2 characterizes the day of the Lord, they are innumerable, and they look like horses and horsemen. In prophecy, horses represent those who have no understanding. [Psalm 32:9]

Joel 2:4

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

The horses in the 2nd woe have heads of lions, and breastplates of fire, hyacinth, and sulphur.

The people in the army of Joel 2 leap on the tops of mountains. The mountains represent God's promises. Jacob compared his blessings to high mountains. When he blessed his son Joseph, he said, "the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." [Genesis 49:26] Jacob knew that the promises he received had a lofty spiritual meaning; they were also durable, and so he compared them to "the everlasting hills."

The members of the army make a lot of noise, like the clattering of horses' hooves, and chariot wheels.

Joel 2:5

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

They each walk in their own path.

Joel 2:7-8

They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

This is not referring to literal swords, but to the sword of Scripture. The warfare of the saints is not against flesh and blood. [Ephesians 6:12]

Joel 2:9

They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

Jesus said, only by coming to him, can we enter his kingdom. He is the door.

John 10:1-4

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

Joel wrote of mountains that drop wine, and hills that flow with milk.

Joel 3:17-18

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

Wine and milk are metaphors representing the teachings of Scripture. Milk represents basic principles. [Hebrews 5:12] New wine flowing on mountains depicts new interpretations of prophecy, and new understanding.