

# “All the Prophets Testify”: Joel 2:1-17

Midweek Bible Study – 2025 August 27

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<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Follow-up to last class: pace, depth, other comments or questions

Outline (*TLSB* p.1448):

- I. Catastrophes Current and Coming (1:2-2:17)
  - A. The Current Catastrophe: The Locust Plague (1:2-20)
  - B. The Coming Catastrophe: The Day of the Lord (2:1-17)**
- II. The Lord’s Response (2:18-3:21)
  - A. To the Locust Plague: Healing and Restoration (2:18-27)
  - B. To the Coming Day of the Lord (2:28-3:21)

The Coming Catastrophe: The Day of the Lord (2:1-17 [the *TLSB* subdivisions are not absolute; confer and compare the ESV’s strophes, the groups of verses forming distinct units; note also that 2:12-19 is appointed as the Old Testament Reading for Ash Wednesday in the A, B, and C years of *Lutheran Service Book’s* Three-Year Lectionary Series and for a Day of Supplication and Prayer]):

2:1 *Blow a trumpet ... sound an alarm ... let ... tremble*: Blowing the trumpet and sounding the alarm arguably are poetic parallelism, while let-tremble in some sense moves from a “cause” to a result. *CSSB* notes the trumpet was made of a ram’s or bull’s horn and could be used to signal approaching danger (Allen likens it to a modern air-raid siren; however, in 2:15 blowing the trumpet calls to religious assembly; Laetsch suggests alarm was signaled by a continuous peal, while other blowings were short, sharp tones or blasts, which Allen likens to the tolling of church bells). Roehrs-Franzmann refers to the trumpets of Revelation 8-9, with the fifth trumpet’s introducing “a plague of monstrous locusts”. The imperatives are masculine plural, but we might wonder whom, if anyone, is specifically being addressed (for example, the priests and ministers of 1:13? Confer Keil-Deltizsch with reference to vv.14 and 15; confer Allen). Also, while the English “let” sounds permissive to our ears, the sense is more of a command. In general, trembling could be from terror-fear from the law and/or from reverence-fear from the Gospel (confer on 2:11, perhaps somewhat as an inclusio).

*in Zion ... on my holy mountain ... all the inhabitants of the land*: Zion can be narrowly the hill before the temple mount and more-widely include the Temple Mount, Jerusalem (the capital city), and the whole country. Kretzmann refers to “the center of Jehovah’s worship and the place of His presence in the midst of His people”. Though *CSSB* suggests that Zion is parallel to the holy mountain, we might see also progression out from the Temple Mount to the whole nation. With reference to “my”, Allen suggests Joel takes over for the Lord after the initial line and similarly refers to 2:12.

*for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near:* Note the similar “coming” and “near” language as in 1:15, where *TLSB* said “the day of the Lord” was the sending of the locusts. (We might think of John the Baptizer and Jesus’s language about the Kingdom and Jesus’s promise in Revelation.) Here in 2:1, *TLSB* says the earlier vision is continuing and foreshadowing the judgment at the end of time, perhaps with the plague of the locusts being used as a picture of Judgment Day (see *TLSB* p.1448). Roehrs-Franzmann comments, “All that has been pictured in the first chapter appears now in higher relief”, referring to the prominence of the Day of the Lord in 2:1-11, the explicitness of the call to repentance in 2:12-17, and the richness and fullness of the Lord’s promise of restoration that follows in 2:18-27. We know Judgment Day brings Christians their deliverance, but there does not seem to be much optimism in this verse and those that follow immediately. Note the repetition of the day of the Lord in 2:11, perhaps as an inclusio.

*2:2: darkness ... gloom ... clouds ... thick darkness:* four different nouns in two lines elaborate on the day of the Lord from 2:1. The Hebrew word that the ESV translates “gloom” (*aphelah*) can also have the sense of “darkness”, and the second Hebrew word that the ESV translates “thick darkness” (*araphel*) can have more the sense a heavy or dark cloud, and there may be some wordplay with their similar sounds. *CSSB* comments, “Darkness is a common prophetic figure used of the day of the Lord ... and is generally a metaphor for distress and suffering”.

*Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains:* the Hebrew noun (*shachar*) is usually translated “dawn” (for example, NIV), and *CSSB* refers to “bitter irony” that what might usually suggest relief from sorrow or gloom describes the locusts spreading like light. Luther refers to not being able to hold back the dawn or escape this enemy. Kretzmann comments, “the wings of the locusts reflecting the rays of the sun in a murky light before their immense numbers shut out the sun altogether” (confer Keil-Deltizsch). Allen refers to “The uncanny sight of normal scenery obliterated by these teeming legions of dark-bodied insects”.

*a great and powerful people:* The locusts are again said to be personified as in 1:6. Note also 2:11, where reference is made to the Lord’s “army” (*chayil*), not His Heavenly Hosts but implicitly the locusts (see also 2:5’s “army” [though the Hebrew word *am*] and 2:7’s “warriors” and “soldiers”). The singular collective noun that the ESV translates “people” (*am*; compare NIV84 “army”) apparently leads the ESV to render singulars that follow as plurals, such as “their” and “them” (compare NASB95 “it”).

*never been before ... nor will be again ... through the years of all generations:* the three lines seem to recall the unprecedented nature of the plague as expressed in the rhetorical question of 1:2. The single final day of the Lord, of course, does not have any new “years” or “generations” after it, though the day of the Lord as the Messianic Age in which we live does have successive years and new generations.

*2:3 Fire ... flame:* A further comparison seems to be being made between the locusts and the day of the Lord (confer *TLSB*’s “like”), though the “fire” and “flame” of 1:19 need not be literal either, as we discussed previously. Kretzmann refers to parching and withering heat. Keil-Delitzsch refers to the plague of hail and fire against Egypt in Exodus 9:23-24 and the lightening and fire at Sinai in Exodus 19:16-18. *CSSB* suggests the “staccato character” of 2:3-11 “is appropriate for the imagery of war”.

*Before ... behind ... before ... behind*: Instead of flame fire before and behind the locusts, which maybe is hard to imagine (Allen refers to “a fiery aura emanating from the advancing locusts”), the verse shifts to the changed condition of the land before and after the locusts, from being like the garden of Eden (*TLSB*’s “lavishly abundant”; *CSSB* rightly points out “before the fall”) to a desolate wilderness, a contrast *CSSB* indicates is used repeatedly elsewhere.

2:4 *Their appearance ... they run*: *TLSB* somewhat inexplicably refers to the verse as comparing the sound of the locusts to charging chariots (perhaps in error for 2:5?), when the Hebrew word that the ESV translates “appearance” (*mareh*) refers to what is seen and the poetic parallelism refers arguably connects “appearance” with how “they run” (Luther says they “run about swiftly and fight bravely”), though Kretzmann refers to the heads of the locusts’ resembling the heads of the horses (confer Keil-Delitzsch).

*horses ... war horses*: the Hebrew word that the ESV translates “horses” (*cuc*) can refer to swiftness and so horses or chariot horses, and the Hebrew word that the ESV translates “war horses” (*parash*) is a horse, steed, or warhorse. Note that there is arguably an element of running in both lines of the couplet. *CSSB* notes that Joel reverses Job’s comparison from Job 39:20.

2:5 *rumbling of chariots ... crackling of a flame of fire*: in these two couplets sound seems to be in focus, though in this case *TLSB* somewhat inexplicably refers to chariots’ armor and the locusts’ exoskeletons (perhaps in error for 2:4?). The mention of chariots perhaps is not surprising given the mention of horses in 2:4, and the crackling of the flame perhaps is not surprising given its mention in 2:3.

*leap on top of the mountains ... devouring the stubble*: actions of the locusts are in view, and, though different Hebrew words are used, reference may be made back to 1:4 where what the hopping locust leaves is eaten by the destroying locust. *CSSB* comments, “Mountains, though barriers to ordinary horses and chariots, are no deterrent to locusts.” Kretzmann refers to chariots clattering along over rough mountain roads (confer Keil-Delitzsch).

*like a powerful army*: see the use of the Hebrew *am* in 2:2, where the ESV translated “people”, and see the use of the Hebrew *chayil* in 2:11, noting also the “warriors” and “soldiers” in 2:7. Perhaps there is movement from animal to human combatants.

*drawn up for battle*: the verb has the idea of being arranged, set, or lay in order. The Hebrew noun translated “battle” (*milchamah*) certainly is consistent with the mentions of warhorses and chariots (confer 2:7’s “men of battle”).

2:6 *Before them peoples ... all faces*: Unlike 2:3’s two uses of a different Hebrew word translated “before”, in this case the word translated “before” has more the idea of “by reason” or “as a result of” (though compare NIV “At the sight of them” and *CSSB*’s commentary on it). And, the plural “peoples” (*am*) in this case is not the locusts but the people of the land, poetically parallel to “all faces” (though compare Keil-Delitzsch, who says the reference is not to the tribes of Israel but nations generally).

*are in anguish ... grow pale:* *TLSB* comments “People are so struck with dread and despair that the blood leaves their faces and they look pallid.” Perhaps worth remembering again at this point is that the plague of locusts are being used as a picture of Judgment Day. *CSSB* refers to anguish from the famine that the locusts will cause (the term “anguish” Laetsch says is used of women in labor). The Hebrew expression that the *ESV* translates “grow pale” might be more-literally rendered “gather blackness”, and *Kretzmann* comments, “losing the glowing color of health, growing pale with conscious helplessness”. *Keil-Delitzsch* refers to one’s drawing into oneself and causing the blood to fly from the face and extremities. *Luther* says, “It is not completely clear to me what this means.”

*2:7 like warriors ... soldiers:* behind the *ESV*’s word “warriors” is a Hebrew (*gibbowr*) that can mean strong men, brave men, or mighty men. Behind the *ESV*’s word “soldiers” is a Hebrew construction that might be translated more-literally as “men of battle”, using the Hebrew word for “battle” that was used in 2:5 (*milchamah*).

*charge ... scale the wall... march each on his way... not swerve from their paths:* The two pairs of somewhat similar verbs combine for a total of four verbs suited to the military discussion. The verb “charge” lacks a complement (such as “into battle”, though we might imagine into an open field or up a hill [confer 2:5]). *TLSB* says, “The city walls are no obstacle to them”. Each one marches on his “ways” (plural in the Hebrew), and perhaps so together they do not swerve from their paths. (Confer the same idea in 2:8, which has the same Hebrew verb for “march” but other words for “each” and “path”).

*2:8 They do not jostle ... each marches:* the couplet certainly seems to restate the idea of 2:7, perhaps emphasizing the precision marching despite the enormous swarm of soldiers, as it were (*Allen* refers to “uncanny parade-ground precision”). *Roehrs-Franzmann* refers to their “uncannily disciplined and unswerving advance”.

*they burst through the weapons and are not halted:* the image seems to be that of an offensive army coming through defensive weapons. *TLSB* comments, “Armies would clash as units in a great shoving match. The army that broke the others’ wall of shields and spears would win.” *Kretzmann* comments, “It was and is vain to resist them by the means ordinarily used to stop the progress of an invading army.”

*2:9 leap upon the city ... run upon the walls ... climb upon the houses ... enter through the windows:* an amazingly detailed description paints the progression, perhaps from the battlefield of 2:8. *CSSB* refers back to the plague of locusts against the Egyptians (Exodus 10:6) and comments, “Latticed windows with no glass would not stop them.” *TLSB* comments, “Nothing will keep them out, so their invasion will be total.”

*like a thief:* though at first it seems only the last clause has the comparison, the likeness arguably could apply to all four clauses. The *TLSB* center column of cross-references refers to John 10:1, where the thief climbs into the sheepfold by a way other than the door. We may also think of the New Testament references to the Lord’s coming as a thief in the night, such as Luke 12:39-40, which we heard recently, and others like it (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3), which likeness is particularly on point in this case.

2:10 *The earth quakes ... the heavens tremble ... the sun and moon are darkened ... the stars withdraw their shining*: heavens probably should be understood as “sky” and not the place of God’s abode (confer the sun, moon, and stars in the second couplet). As *TLSB* notes, “Signs in the heavens of the day of the Lord, as also predicted of the Last Day”, which can both refer to the same occasion.

*before them*: the preposition in this case, as in 2:3 and 2:11, is more-literally of location (in contrast to 2:6, where the ESV translates a different Hebrew preposition also as “before”). Laetsch mentions the thickened masses of the locusts’ making the ground seem to be moving. Keil-Delitzsch refer to Jerome’s suggestion that the locusts do not move heaven and earth but that to those who suffer from the locusts the heavens appear to shake and the earth reel, but Keil-Delitzsch returns to the point of comparison between the locusts and the day of the Lord and notes Christ’s use of the figure of speech in Matthew 24:29, for example (but compare Luther).

2:11 *The LORD utters his voice*: the Name of the Lord is used, the consonants for what we would say is “Yahweh” often pointed with the vowels for “Adonai”, the noun meaning “lord”. The speaking of the Lord can bring to mind His Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, before He was incarnate as Jesus. The content of what is uttered seems to be a command that is carried out in what follows.

*before his army*: “before” is in location as 2:3 and 2:10, and, as noted previously at 2:2 and 2:5, for example, the army is not His Heavenly Hosts but the locusts, still being used as a picture of Judgment Day.

*for his camp is exceedingly great*: “camp” can be the place of encampment or those who encamp, as perhaps seems more likely in this case. The exceedingly “great” in this phrase (*rab*) is different from the subsequent “great” referring to the day of the Lord (*gadowl*), with this “great” perhaps emphasizing more the “much” or “many” or “numerous” element of the camp.

*he who executes his word is powerful*: “the executing one” is a masculine singular participle apparently referring to the previously-plural but now singular-collective locusts as a picture of the Day of Judgment, when God’s judgment is carried out by the Lord Jesus. (*TLSB* says, “God sends these locusts in order to judge Judah’s unfaithfulness”, but in this portion of Joel, if the emphasis is on the coming catastrophe of the day of the Lord, and not the current catastrophe of the plague of locusts, then that comment is not quite right.) The “word” in this clause likely refers back to the “voice” in the first clause of the verse. The Hebrew word translated “powerful” (*atsuwim*) can be “mighty” but in this instance seems more likely to have the word’s sense of “vast” or “numerous”, given the poetic parallelism with the preceding line in this couplet.

*great and very awesome*: as noted on this verse’s earlier use of “great”, “great” in this case is a different Hebrew word (*gadowl*), which can have to do with magnitude and extent, intensity, importance, and the like (Allen says “momentous”). “Awesome” might evoke surfer dudes looking at an upcoming wave or commenting on a past ride, but in this case the Hebrew participle has to do with something that is fearful, dreadful, to be feared, to be held in awe, to make afraid or inspire reverence or Godly fear (confer 2:1, perhaps somewhat as an inclusio). Archaic uses of “awful” and “terrible” perhaps mislead.

*who can endure it?:* with reference to Nahum 1:6 and Malachi 3:2 (the latter passage perhaps familiar from Handel's *Messiah* movement number 6), *TLSB* answers, "Ultimately, only those who trust in the Lord's promised Messiah will be spared when God's judgment is revealed." Thus, a call for all to return to the Lord follows.

2:12 *Yet even now:* *TLSB* may see the locust plague as still impending, but we have discussed it as having come. This call to repentance seems positioned between the anticipatory judgment of that plague and the final judgment of the day of the Lord that is the Last Day (or our deaths, whichever comes first). Note again *LSB*'s use of 2:12-19 for Ash Wednesday and a Day of Supplication and Prayer (such as some might have had after 9/11). "Now" is the time for repentance, and, as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther noted in the first of the Ninety-Five Theses, the Christian's whole life is to be one of repentance.

*declares the LORD:* the Divinely-inspired Joel indicates a direct quotation from the Lord (confer *TLSB* p.1079), not that all of what Joel is saying is not in some sense equally the Lord's Word. The "quotation" typically goes through the first line of 2:13 (though compare NIV84). See also the preceding discussion of the Lord's speaking at 2:1.

*return ... return:* the Lord says to return, and so does Joel, perhaps with the Lord's emphasizing how the people are to return and Joel's emphasizing why the people should return, that is, due to the character of the Lord. Allen notes that the call to "return" presupposes the covenant relationship (not long ago I wrote a column on the matter of "returning" to something one has not known). While people cannot "return" or "repent" on their own, the Lord's call enables people to "return", though some resist His call and do not "repent". (Confer *TLSB* p.1080, where repentance is described as "God's work".) Repentance in this broader sense can be said to consist of sorrow over sin, trust in God to forgive sin for Jesus's sake, and at least the desire to do better. Laetsch points out the need for Gospel preaching to work that true and full repentance.

*with all your heart ... fasting ... weeping ... mourning:* *TLSB* refers to returning "with sincerity and full conviction". Allen comments, "Strangely there is no explicit reference to the sin of the people" and suggests that left to the people is to search their hearts and habits for the sin that to which God is reacting. We might note that at least weeping and mourning were happening after the plague of locusts as described in 1:5 and 9, for example, and the call for repentance in that chapter also called for a fast and arguably a heartfelt trust in the Lord that resulted in a cry to Him for mercy (1:14). Note that the "heart" carries over to what the ESV formats as the next line of the "couplet".

2:13 *and rend your hearts and not your garments:* *TLSB* comments, "The Lord wants inner sincerity, not just outward show (Ps 51:17)", and *TLSB* quotes Martin Chemnitz regarding hypocrites rending their garments and Christians' needing to bear fruit worthy of repentance. Ideally, the inner sincerity leads to an appropriate outward manifestation (Romans 10:9-10). God is not forbidding any rending of garments or other such outward manifestations of repentance. For example, ashes can be used appropriately, though the appointed Gospel Reading for Ash Wednesday is Jesus's critique arguably of the hypocrites' use of ashes (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21). People did express their heartfelt and grievous affliction at such things as news of a death or other tragedy by tearing their upper and under garment in front of the heart, baring its sorrow, and such rending sometimes was accompanied by putting on sackcloth (1:8, 13) and putting dirt or ashes on the head, such rending is never commanded by God, though through Hosea God says He will rend the chests of His rebellious people (Hosea 13:8).

*The Lord your God ... is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love:* “merciful” is the Hebrew *rachum*, which describes Him as compassionate; “steadfast love” is the Hebrew *chesed*, which can be goodness, kindness, faithfulness (in many places traditionally translated “mercy”). *CSSB* notes the description “Recalls the great self-characterization of God in Exodus 34:6-7, which runs like a golden thread through the OT”. *TLSB* comments, “It is God’s nature to forgive, thus, He forgives because of who He is, not in exchange for our repentance.” Our repentance (including our faith) is not our contribution, nor is it strictly a “cause” of our forgiveness, but, when we repent, then God forgives us.

*he relents over disaster:* the ESV’s “relents” translates the Hebrew verb *nacham*, which in this instance can be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion. Luther paraphrases, “He is easily moved to forgive.” The ESV’s “disaster” translates the Hebrew *rah*, which can be something we would regard as bad or evil, distress or misery, calamity or adversity (the KJV translates “evil”). God is not “sorry” as if He did something “wrong” and so needs to “repent” over it (as the KJV tends to translate; in the narrow sense of have sorrow or contrition), but God can be moved to pity and have compassion. That God does not “change His mind” can be a very difficult matter to understand properly. Helpful can be seeing that we are changed in relationship to God, while God’s law and Gospel remain the same: our not repenting keeps us under His law’s condemnation, and our repenting puts us under His Gospel’s forgiveness.

2:14 *Who knows whether he will not turn and relent:* Regarding “who knows”, Keil-Delitzsch repeats Hitzig’s suggestion that “because” would have been offensive to the Lord, and Laetsch says the question does not express doubt or unbelief. Luther says, “He is speaking in the fashion of a terrified conscience which finally, after being afflicted, is barely encouraged and begins to breathe again for hope and for the goodness of God.” Where the explicit mention of “disaster” in 2:13 was general, the implicit “disaster” over which the Lord might “turn and relent” in this instance is at best unclear. If the plague of locusts has not yet come, then perhaps that plague is the implicit disaster to which Joel refers (*TLSB* perhaps somewhat contradictorily or unclearly says God’s purpose in sending the disaster is so that people repent and receive forgiveness and avert disaster). However, if the plague of locusts has already come, then something else must be in view, presumably the ultimate day of the Lord, with its final judgment. That day is coming, to be sure (confer 2:1), and its timing is “known” to God if not fatalistically “set”, but whether that day is a “disaster” for us or not can change, as noted in the discussion of 2:13. Intervening temporal consequences for our sin can sometimes be avoided, and something such as those may be in view instead (for example, David’s praying for his and Bathsheba’s son until he died [2 Samuel 12:16-17], and perhaps also Josiah’s covenant renewal [2 Kings 23:1-3]; Luther refers to Abraham’s praying for Sodom and Gomorrah but accomplishing nothing). *TLSB* quotes Chemnitz regarding such temporal punishments (confer the contrast to blessings that follows in the second line of the couplet). Any problems understanding God’s Word are always ours, not His Word’s.

*and leave a blessing behind him:* In contrast to the “disaster” implicit in the preceding line is a “blessing”. *TLSB* comments, “Along with the Lord’s mercy comes every other blessing, among them sustenance and protection.” Perhaps restoration from the plague of locusts is somewhat in view and suggested by what follows. Roehrs-Franzmann comments that the hoped-for blessing is a good harvest and renewed fertility generally acknowledged as a good gift from God in worship and a whole life lived to God.

*a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God: TLSB* comments, “Offering such sacrifices to God would acknowledge Him as Creator and Provider of all good things.” That comment is true enough, but it seems to ignore both the question of why God might be “leaving behind” offerings for Himself and the implication that He essentially would have undone the plague of locusts and restored to the people such that they could offer grain and drink offerings, previously described as cut off seemingly as a result of the plague (for example, 1:9 and 13). Confer Roehrs-Franzmann, who comments, “He can restore to His penitent people the blessings of the land and of renewed worship”. Confer also Kretzmann, who links the blessing to the need for the people to “unite in a great service of prayer and supplication”. (If after the judgment of the Last Day, then the worship is the eternal worship of heaven so recently considered in Revelation.)

2:15-16 *Blow the trumpet ... consecrate a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather ... Consecrate ... assemble ... gather*: there is considerable poetic parallelism. Blowing the trumpet was mentioned in 2:1. Consecrating was mentioned in 1:14. A fast was mentioned in 1:14 and 2:12 (we might think about our Lenten fast). Calling a solemn assembly was mentioned in 1:14. Gathering was mentioned in 1:14. The Hebrew verb translated “assemble” is introduced in Joel in this instance (the Hebrew verb translated “assemble” appears to be unrelated to the Hebrew noun translated “assembly”, which, as *CSSB* notes, refers to the religious community). *TLSB* refers to people preparing for worship by abstaining from work, food, and sexual relations and bathing and washing their clothes (abstaining from food is usually what we think of as “fasting”, though we might give-up other things for Lent). While people obviously have a role in such things as blowing a trumpet and the other verbs, we would say that ultimately God, especially God the Holy Spirit, calls, gathers, and consecrates (the same meaning as “sanctifies”, that is, sets apart as holy) each of us and the whole Christian Church on earth. God does that through His Word, especially its Sacramental forms: Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper. We set apart Sundays as holy in order for God to set us apart as holy through the right use of His Means of Grace.

*Zion ... people ... congregation ... elders ... children, even nursing infants*: again, there is considerable poetic parallelism. Zion was mentioned in 2:1. The “peoples” referring to God’s people were mentioned in 2:6. The congregation is introduced in Joel in this instance. Elders were mentioned in 1:2 and 14. Children were mentioned in 1:3. Kretzmann comments that “since all of them, from the smallest to the greatest, were guilty” so “no one is to be omitted in this great appeal for mercy” (confer Keil-Deltizsch). *CSSB* comments, “As with the call to mourning in ch. 1, no segment of the community was exempt.” *TLSB* comments, “This sacred purification included everyone, regardless of age or circumstances.” Worth noting is that boys were circumcised at the age of eight days, and neither the boys nor the girls were sent off to “Children’s Church” but were part of the assembled congregation (the Old Testament “sacraments” anticipate the New Testament Sacraments). Of course, Jesus Himself blessed little children, even infants (for example, Luke 18:15, and the Greek word *brephos* used there is also used for unborn children, indicating no distinction in the estimation of life inside or outside of the womb).

*Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber:* Roehrs-Franzmann refers to the bridegroom's exemption from military service (Deuteronomy 24:5), and Allen says "and other public duties", but not from this corporate repentance. A virgin's mourning her bridegroom was used as a likeness in 1:8. Allen comments, "there is no place for normally legitimate human joy". The two poetically-parallel lines can be understood as referring to the same place. Kretzmann refers to their preparing for their wedding. *CSSB* says the chamber is where the marriage was consummated. *TLSB* says the "chamber" is "The wedding canopy" and comments, "Even newlyweds were to postpone their honeymoon in order to observe this sacred fast." (There was a time when the Church did not conduct weddings during the penitential season of Lent.)

2:17 *Between the vestibule and the altar:* we might expect the pairing to be sequenced in the order that one would encounter them coming towards the temple: first the altar of burnt sacrifice and then the raised area just before the entrance to the Holy Place. Confer the discussion at 1:13's "go in", with the temple and its precincts understood more loosely than the Holy Place and Most-Holy Place. Roehrs-Franzmann suggests the priests are "pictured as standing with their backs to the altar of burn offerings and facing the sanctuary". With reference to 1 Kings 6:3, Laetsch gives the measurements of thirty feet wide and fifteen feet deep; those would be of Solomon's temple, and the one of which Joel is speaking was built by Zerubbabel, but presumably designed on Solomon's (so Allen, who refers to this inner court as "the priests' court").

*let the priests, the ministers of the LORD weep:* The priests and ministers were described as mourning in 1:9, and they were called to put on and pass the night in sackcloth, lament, wail, and go-in in 1:13. If not already there, in this instance they are described as doing their official duty

*and say, "Spare your people, O LORD":* As *TLSB* notes, the priests are interceding for the people, and we can note that their intercession includes themselves. Like intercessors before and after them, the priests anticipate our Great High Priest Jesus, Who intercedes for us and continues His High-Priestly Office through those He calls and ordains to serve on His behalf. Kretzmann refers to their chanting a solemn litany. The opposite of sparing the people is described in what follows.

*and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?* *TLSB* notes that "heritage" was a covenant name for God's people and a special basis of confidence for Israel (or, in this case, more strictly, Judah). The Divinely-inspired Joel, like others before and after him, suggests that, if God does not spare His people, then the other nations will not only ridicule the un-spared people, to the extent that they still existed, but will also ridicule God Himself, so that His reputation ultimately is at stake (confer *TLSB*). So we pray, "for Your Own Name's sake."

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

*TLSB's* Law and Gospel Application Note for 2:1-11 refers to "natural disasters and warfare looming every larger" and so our doing well "to place our trust in the world's only hope, the Creator and Redeemer of all. Through His son's death and resurrection, God promises to raise us from the dead and give us eternal life in a new heaven and new earth."

Similarly, on 2:12-17, *TLSB* comments, “When our sins likewise kindle God’s wrath and threaten to bring us under His judgment, consider the question posed by Joel: ‘Who can endure the awesome day of the Lord?’ Thanks be to God, we have a Savior, our risen Lord Jesus Christ, who has already endured God’s wrath and judgment for us”

Next time, September 17, Joel 2:18-27.

Closing Prayer & Benediction