

A STUDY ON JOEL 2:1-11

(Discourse by Kenneth Williams given at Pre-Memorial Convention at Fort Worth, Texas, March 15, 16, 17, 1974.)

On the occasion of this Pre-Memorial Convention we think it appropriate that we consider our subject on the basis of the One Hope, that Hope being centered in Christ Jesus, for, as Peter declares in Acts 4:12, "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And that includes not only the Church but all mankind. In 1 Tim. 2:4-6 we read, "Who (that is, God) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Certainly the trouble that has come upon man during the early part of the Second Presence is evidence that man cannot begin to extricate himself from the muddled mess he finds himself in. Only the Mediator can do that. Soon all mankind will be privileged to heed to that Mediator who will, in effect, say to the restless sea class, even as he spoke to the Sea of Galilee, "Peace be still!"

We are now in the one hundredth year since the standing up of Michael. You well recall the words of Dan. 12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy People: and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." The events of the day attest to the truthfulness of Daniel's prophecy, for never has the world been in such deep trouble, because, unlike other times of trouble, this one has been continually world-wide, and unceasing, with two global wars, depressions and recessions, conspiracies, civil disobedience, corruption, exposes and even high-level blackmail. Nothing is hidden that is not being revealed; and all of this is breeding the discontent which Joel 2 describes in great detail.

The very purpose of Joel's prophecy as detailed in the verses of our study is to assist us in recognizing the times when these things should come about; that the man of God might be instructed. Certainly the Trump of God, as announced in V. 1 declares the same call to freedom as that which once sounded in the hills and valleys of ancient Israel in the year of Jubilee! Chapter 2 begins with "Blow ye 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 cometh, for it is nigh at hand." This Trump is no less than the Seventh Trump of Rev. 11:15, and the Trump of God in 1 Thess. 4: 16, and they both point to the antitypical Great Jubilee which began at the return of our Lord in 1874 A.D.!

When Joel 2 opens, nearly 1800 years of the Gospel Age lay behind; it had been a time of severe trial for the Church, the Elijah Class. Overcome by the worldly church, she, like

the type, the Prophet Elijah, had already experienced a wilderness condition where she was fed of God for a total of 1260 years--"and the woman (the true church) fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared of God, and that they should feed her there 1,260 days." (Rev. 12:6) In passing, we might call attention to the fact that the wilderness condition was also contemporary with the Papal Millennium, when Papacy was in her heyday, which began 800 A.D. as compared with the Church's entering the wilderness in 539 A.D. But--and this is most important--both ended in 1799 A.D., the beginning of the Time of the End! Certainly this is no accident. Rather, it is additional proof of the verity of Bible Chronology as emphasized by the Pastor in Volumes II and III of Studies in the Scriptures.

While there was an attempt during this period, on the part of the Elijah Class to heal Babylon, it failed. The Reformation did succeed, however, in bringing many of the "golden vessels" into a more prominent, knowledgeable position than they had had at any time since the early days of the Apostles and the early fathers. Notable among these being "Justification by faith" and not by observance of either Mosaic laws or Roman Catholic feasts and that the "Man of Sin" was, and is Papacy. Yet for all their reforming attempts, it failed, and for awhile it looked hopeless for the true followers of the Lamb as the wickedness of the Anti-Christ struck out with a vengeance, butchering many by the sword and the rack, as well as burning by fire. Yet, by the time the Philadelphia period of the church had begun some intrepid pastors were exhorting the world to turn towards God and accept Jesus as their Lord and Master. The very fact that the Elijah Class was to make an effort at reformation before the "Day of the Lord" should come is attested to in the writings of the Pastor in Reprint 3292-93. Bro. Russell in Vol. 2, page 250 says: "The coming of Elijah mentioned by the prophet is 'before this' great and dreadful day of Jehovah (which) began in A. D. 1874." Again we read, Vol. 2, page 251: "The real and greater Elijah has failed to convert and prepare the world to receive the King of Glory, and now, consequently, the great Day of Wrath must come upon the world, to melt, and mellow and humble, and prepare all to cry out from the heart Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

It is at this point that we read in Mal. 4:6, after the Elijah Class had failed to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers" that the Lord exclaims: "I will come (as a result) and smite the earth with a curse." The evidence is clear. The results are coming in. The earth has been smitten exactly for this reason.

Having quickly brought ourselves to the point in time when not only the "eye of faith" but the "eye of the mind" join in recognizing where we are --on the stream of time, we will consider our subject in the present and future sense. Present, in that we recognize much prophecy has been fulfilled in this, our day, and FUTURE in that we can by the "eye of understanding" read the signs as they appear to us day by day. Not being wise beyond our ability but resting wholly on the Word of God and the Harvest Message.

In considering our subject--Joel 2:1-11-- we find that the Jubilee Trumpet had begun to blow right on time, and it declared that the "Day of the Lord" is at hand. "Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion" and "Sound an alarm in My Holy mountain" is the call. Is this strange language? Not at all, for this is exactly what we should expect. Ancient Israel was in some instances called Zion--always, as we understand, pointing to Antitypical Zion, and just as Zion typical had her saints and frauds, so too did nominal Spiritual Zion. Therefore, when the time for the Antitypical Jubilee Trump began to sound, we find that it began first in nominal Spiritual Zion--"for judgment must begin with the House of God." And nominal Zion was certainly due a judgment; for, just as Israel was judged and found wanting in refusal to heed the prophets, so too had nominal Spiritual Zion been found wanting and so was rejected. The Elijah class, having urged Babylon to repentance, did her work, especially from the Reformation period onward. But Babylon would not be healed, as the prophet had testified, so we find that in A.D. 1878 Babylon was cast off--both mother and daughters. Cast off as unfit to contain the "golden vessels of Truth" long hidden in the darkened chambers of Mystic Babylon and her daughters. Peter, in referring to these times (1 Pet. 4:13-17) noted the blessings due Spiritual Zion saying: ". . . rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy . . . for the time is that judgment must begin at the House of God. . . ." It was then in A.D. 1878 that the times ended for the "healing of Babylon" and the call was to "Come out of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4). So the call came, the Trumpet having already sounded, and the Lord's people began to come forth, receiving the first blessings of the Seventh Trump, freeing themselves from the fears of the Dark Ages theology, and the blasphemies of an hireling ministry and priest-craft who are equally subservient to bishops, councils and creeds promulgated by the chief of the Anti-Christ, Satan.

The "alarm" having awakened the True Church of God as to her identity, many of the Lord's people joined in the massive telling of the Harvest message under the leadership of their Captain and His representative, the 7th Messenger to the Church. This telling out was but one portion of the work of Messiah following His return. Indeed, it was not until "Michael stood up" that there was any hope at all for the oppressed everywhere. When the symbolic sounding of the Seventh Trumpet began, the Times of Restitution also began--the time when things began to be righted--but not all at once --for we must remember that Restitution, just as the Jubilee, lasts a thousand years!

Scripturally, our Lord Jesus returned during the period known as "the time of the end." (Dan. 11:40) For as Dan. 12:1 points out, it was to be "at that time" Michael was to stand up and take unto Himself His great authority, and begin His Reign; also it was a time when education for the masses became more pronounced. The poor, no longer ignorant of their just rights, began to demand them and, more times than not, their fancied rights

also, believing that as the wealthy and noble class had rights in excess of honor, they too should be so privileged. And with this came the threat of revolution, socialism, communism and anarchy. They fail to realize that justice, not injustice, prescribes rights and privileges in accordance with the basic, or moral law. The Pastor, in Vol. 2, page 197, says concerning the time of our Lord's Second Advent, and since, that "no reader (should) hastily conclude that there is no evidence of Restitution about us, nor that the Sun of Righteousness is not already gilding the watch tower of Zion and enlightening the world. Let him on the contrary reflect that we are already in the day when the hidden things are being made manifest; and let him remember that the first work of Restitution is properly a breaking down of the old and decaying structure which stands in the place which the new is to occupy. Remember that the first work of the tenderest physician is often to open the wounds, and to cleanse and amputate according to the necessities of the patient in order to make thorough work of the healing. That such service causes pain and is seldom appreciated by the patient at the time, none need be told; and so it is with the work of the great Physician, the Restorer, the Life-giver: He wounds to heal, and the trouble and sifting in the Church and the world are but the lancing and cleansing needful and a most important part of the Restitution work. . .

"In the type, the Trumpet of Jubilee was to be sounded when the Jubilee year began to proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof. The antitype is ushered in with the sounding of the (symbolic) 'Seventh Trump', the 'Trump of God', the 'Last Trump'. . . and while at first it means the surrender of many expired claims and privileges, and a general time of disturbance and unsettling of usages, habits, etc., its full import when rightly appreciated, is 'good tidings of great joy which will be unto all people.'" Yet before these "good tidings" can be fully appreciated the testimony is that it is to be a "Day of darkness and of gloom, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spreads upon the mountains." The "day" is the "Day of the Lord." It is a time of gloominess and forebodings and of prophetic utterances of great men--economists and industrialists, as well as leaders of Governments and Churchianity--all are unable to cope with the circumstances at hand, let alone events reaching further into the future. Oftentimes business indices fail because they cannot anticipate what is to come next on the Socio-political economic scene--as noted by the current babblings of many of these for the year 1974--simply because they cannot anticipate what will be the outcome of the critical oil shortage, and other shortages, manufactured or real, nor how they will affect the economy. Dark indeed is the future for Britain and the continent, and dark it is also for the United States. The nations are at a crossroads--a crossroads that could lead to another major war, or to open anarchy, such as has never been seen. So, as the "morning spreads over the mountains"--(kingdoms of this decaying world)--these dark clouds appear ominous indeed. But there are two sides to this cloud. The side which the world sees, pictures the inability of man to arrange his affairs, no matter how brave their cautious words may be. The other side, where the Sun of Righteousness shines, is like the whiteness of new fallen snow, for it declares the Reign of Righteousness which brings

judgment, even now, on the nations and churchianity, for "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail (hard truth) shall sweep away the refuse of lies, and the waters (truths) shall overflow the hiding places." (Isa. 28:17) This indicates that error shall not be permitted to stumble anyone when the Mediatorial Phase of the present Reign comes to grips with the lives of each individual in a more or less personal way.

The remainder of V. 2 with the other Scriptures tends to refer to the Lord's great army of malcontents and discontents, regardless of their station in life. We can see this about us now, for many who have and are still practicing revolution, are from the wealthy and upper middleclass who, despairing of the way their elders have conducted themselves, accusing them of hypocrisy, are also finding themselves equally incompetent. Of this day Zeph. 1:15 says: "The great day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of whiteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." And of this day and this army, Joel 2:3 continues, saying: "A fire devoureth before them"-the destructive force of anarchy when everyone as described in Zech. 14: 13 "shall lay hold on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor. . . and behind them a flame burneth (they shall see the result of their destruction, the flame indicating that they shall retain the mental picture of their insurrection for a long time to come, until the Mediatorial Reign completely dissipates this by Kingdom blessings). The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." Ah yes! After all the destruction is over, then that which is before them for all eternity is a veritable garden of Eden, where nothing will interfere with their life when fully restored to the perfect condition of father Adam. But, behind them--when memory brings it to bear--will seem a horrendous nightmare, when sin was rampant and death stalked the land. "Yea, and nothing shall escape them" (very possibly refers to their work of destruction as recited in the remaining verses of our study).

Joel 2:4-11 reads as follows: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. 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. 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. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and the Lord shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp is very great; for He is strong that executeth His word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can abide it?"

These verses indicate the force and scope of this army. "For his camp" represents the world, and "the earth (society) shall quake before them." The trouble begins when the "trumpet" is blown, and the Trump of Jubilee began to blow at our Lord's return (1 Thess. 4:16). It is when the Millennial "morning spreads upon the mountains (kingdoms)," that this great time of trouble arises. Historically we know that from about 1900 to 1920 millions were killed in riots, wars and pogroms: from the blood riots and pogroms of Czarist Russia and Communist Russia, to the Great War and the riots of post-war Germany which led to the Hitler-Nazi reign of terror; the great labor strikes and riots of this country through the decades of the twenties and thirties; the Black uprisings of the sixties, and now we see the terrorist campaigns conducted by IRA and Arab Terrorists. All of these lead to even more trouble, which will help to prepare the people to seek the Lord in the Mediatorial Reign of Christ, Head and Body. Of this period we are living in, we turn again to the writings of the Pastor. Vol. IV, page 540, after having declared that the battles and troubles of this day will be no less than that which came upon France during the French Revolution, says: "Present day conditions render each member of the social structure more dependent than ever before, not only for new and increased comforts and luxuries but also for the very necessities of life (note Britain). The stoppage of the railroad traffic alone would mean starvation within a week in our large cities: and general anarchy would mean the paralysis of every industry dependent on commerce and confidence." Our Pastor then refers to Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:2 and Matt. 24:21 where our Lord Jesus declared that the time of trouble will be "such as was not since there was a nation. . . nor ever shall be." Today we can see how this will be even more so than when Bro. Russell wrote, because with more population, more systematized industry, a switch thrown here or not thrown, there could literally stop the flow of foodstuffs, and other necessities and bring general chaos and starvation in an even quicker time. Little wonder the people are beginning to worry--they have ever reason to be scared to death.

Because we cannot improve on the writings of the Pastor we refer you again to the Fourth Volume, page 541, par. 1 which we quote in part: "The battle of this great day of God Almighty will be the greatest revolution the world has ever seen because it will be one in which every principle of unrighteousness will be involved: for as truly in this judgment of the nations as in the judgment of individuals "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known." (Matt. 10:26)" Surely this statement has never been more true than that which has come to light recently within our own country when presidents, as well as the smallest citizens, are challenged to prove their honesty before the court of public opinion. Thus we see that each questioned leader arouses the ire of the revolutionists and the anarchists giving them an excuse to undermine civil government, thereby destroying the confidence of the masses whom they govern by exposing their weaknesses of the flesh. How well the prophet interprets this. In V. 6 we read: "Before their face (the Lord's Army) the people shall be much pained (frightened); all faces shall gather blackness." In other words, soon now, we believe, abject terror will

seize the people for, as the Scriptures declare, "every man's hand shall be against his neighbor."

V. 8 tends to indicate that while this army will be composed of various elements of society, without leadership per se, yet their ultimate aim is the same. That is why we read, "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path (indicating there is design in the individual anarchist's purpose for striking out against organized government). And when they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded--the thought being that even though wounded unto death, yet another will pick up the tool of hate and carry on their warfare against society, religion and government. In other words, until they have accomplished their purpose, nothing shall cause them to cease their efforts. Little wonder then that the earth (society) shall quake before them, and the religious element, specifically Babylon, shall quake--"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly (the vultures of society, be they communist, socialist, anarchist) in the midst of heaven (the ecclesiastical systems) "Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the Great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains (captains of Finance and Industry), and the flesh of mighty men (men of power from whatever source gained) and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them (seems to refer to the false doctrine: of the apostate churches, as well as those that teach them), and the flesh of all, free and bond, both small and great (representing those who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads)." (Rev. 19:17, 18) "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea (restless humanity which has, and is, and will continue to make up the Lord's great army) saying, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all". (Rev. 18:21) Here we believe the "stone" represents the Kingdom of our returned Lord, and that it corresponds with the "stone" of Dan. 2:34, 35 where it was cut out without hands and smote the image on its feet smashing it to the ground. This view, we think, pictures the destruction let loose in Aug., 1914 when World War I broke out. We note that in this instance it was the nations themselves that were angered and could not even wait until the due time--October of that same year. But in the Revelation account it is like unto a great millstone, indicating that though the Gentiles nations were foreclosed in A.D. 1914--the lease having run out--the masses then began to run wild. Soon these nations--long since expelled--will feel another and greater final blow which will complete the overthrow and the "iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like chaff of the summer threshing floors" with eventually the "wind" blowing the chaff (the nations) out of existence. But this was not to be done until the Church is completely sealed, as recorded in Rev. 7:3 where we read: "Hurt not the earth (society) neither the sea (restless humanity), nor the trees (the righteous), till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads", indicating that before the final phase of this great trouble is come the Church will be with its Head. And so on the basis of this Scripture it would appear there is little time left to

make our calling and election sure. Let us strive with DILIGENCE to be more than overcomers!

In V, 10 we read, "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." If we understand this passage correctly, we find that the Lord's great army will do its job well, for the earth (society) as well as the ecclesiastical system, shall tremble in fear at what they see before them. Even now there is some evidence that the denominational systems are trying to strike a bargain with one another, shoring up their battlements, as it were, in the hopes of eventually overcoming the wrath of the people. That is one of the reasons for their social gospel, for their political action, and for their striving to keep ecumenism alive! But alas, to no avail! Already they have been denied by the Lord, cast off as unworthy of service, and as a result we find the sun and moon darkened to them, because the hope of the Ransom has been lost sight of and the Mosaic Law, once held in esteem by Jew and nominal Christians, who more often than not involve themselves in polemics, thus denying Bible testimony that God gave the Law, not some heathen king sitting on the throne of an impudent little kingdom, regardless of how ethical or moral he might have been.

The testimony of V. 11 is: "And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp is very great; for He is strong that executeth His word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? The word "voice" has the thought of command, like in 1 Thess. 4:16: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout (a word of encouragement to the oppressed, again indicating that the return of the King is the point in time when the Trump of Jubilee is to be sounded) with the voice of the Archangel (the Michael of Dan. 12:1, mighty in power and authority), and with the Trump of God (the Seventh or Jubilee Trump)."

In the Diaglott translation of Mark 13:19, 20 we read Jesus' comments on this, our day: "For (He says) in those days will be distress, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created, till now (our day), nor ever will be. And except the Lord cut short the days no person could survive; but on account of the chosen, whom He has selected, he has cut short the days." We are happy the Lord has arranged to cut short these terrible days which the world is now in, not only for our sake--the Church this side of the veil--but also because it will mean lessening the suffering of the world of mankind. It will mean too, that they will be privileged to receive the Mediatorial blessings sooner than if it would be permitted to drag on interminably. Yet the world must experience trouble, in order for them to more fully appreciate the great blessings they will receive from The Christ, when they are privileged to walk up the Highway of Holiness, at the close of which they will be cleansed and acceptable to God.

In Rom. 8:22, 19 Paul says ". . . we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain (sin) together until now. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." It is at that time when Michael stands up that we find knowledge increasing for the common man through the newly created free public school and the increase of travel due to the development of the steam engine and other means of locomotion, notable the automobile. And it all occurs precisely on time, during the Time of the End. With these privileges abounding to one and all, little wonder that "hope" began to have fulfillment, even if not recognized by the vast majority, for indeed the Seventh Trump, the Trump of God, the Trump of Jubilee did begin to sound, and right on time.

Hope is a state of mind which trusts in and longs for, a better life, a better day. For 6,000 years this hope has continued to linger in the human heart. For many "hope" often was their last resort. That is why, when the Trump of God began to sound, the pent-up emotions of these 6,000 years began to give vent to the feelings of the masses. New demands were made. Labor unions began to abound, and civil rights became an issue--not so much at first for the poor or the minority groups, but for the growing middle class who were beginning to flex their new-found muscle.

It was under these conditions that events of the last 100 years, especially since World War I, gained impetus, began to be translated to hard realism--the "haves" having too much, and the "have nots" having too little. This common malady which came on society began with the "have not" nations and led to two World Wars and a great depression. Since the last war we find the "have nots" among the little people demanding their just dues. And what do we find? We find that the anarchistic tendencies are beginning to exert themselves, somewhat along the lines of the French Revolution. Already we have seen a Watts, a Cleveland and a Detroit burst aflame, which is indicative of what Joel 2 has been talking about when "every man's hand is against his neighbor"; when that "dark night comes when no man can work." We are living witnesses to the greater shaking than that which occurred at Sinai, and it will shake even more as the darkest hour approaches. Again we read (Heb. 12:26): "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Here significantly enough, is the promise made by our God that not only "the earth"--society, would be shaken, but that ecclesiastical powers (the nominal heaven) would also be shaken. And in V. 27 we read "and this word 'yet once more' signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken (including Truth, Righteousness, and the New Universal World Empire of Christ and His Church) may remain;" evidencing additional proof that the Kingdom of Heaven must be set up and operating before the complete fall of the present evil system.

Dear Friends, how else can we harmonize the prophecies relating to this our day and separate the King from them. Dan. 2:44 testifies that "in the days of these kings (representing the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image. . . the Gentile Kingdoms. . . and

WHILE they are still reigning) shall the God of Heaven set up His Kingdom (Christ's) which shall never be destroyed; and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all of these kingdoms and it shall stand forever."

Aren't we thankful that, as we approach the Memorial, we can see before us clear evidence that our God who arranged for an provided the means whereby each member of Adam's race, including Adam, may be saved, has given us an intellectual appreciation of that which He is doing on our behalf, and not for us only but for all the "groaning creation?" Let us then rejoice and gladly declare to anyone who will listen "THY GOD REIGNETH!" Reigneth, that is, in the person of His Present and Glorified Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!