

## **Preface To The Prophet Joel**

### **(1532)**

Joel does not indicate at what time he lived and preached, but the ancients say that it was in the time of Hosea and Amos. We are satisfied with that, and have no better suggestion.

He is a kindly and gentle man and does not denounce and rebuke as do the other prophets, but beseeches and laments, and would make people righteous with good, friendly words, and protect them against harm and misfortune; but it happened to him as to the other prophets, — they did not believe his words and held him a fool.

Nevertheless, he is highly praised in the New Testament, for, in Acts 2:16, St. Peter quotes him and Joel had to provide, the first sermon that was preached in the Christian Church, on Pentecost, at Jerusalem, when the Holy Ghost was given. St. Paul, too, makes glorious use of the saying, “He that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” which is contained in Joel 2.

In the first chapter, he prophesies future punishment upon the people of Israel; they are to be destroyed and carried away by the Assyrians; and he calls the Assyrians caterpillars, grasshoppers, beetles and vermin. For the Assyrians devoured the kingdom of Israel bit by bit, until they had completely ruined it; but in the end, King Sennacherib had to suffer defeat before Jerusalem. Joel touches on that here in Joel 2:20, when he says, “And him from the north will I drive far from you.”

In the end of the second chapter, and from there on, he prophesies of the Kingdom of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, and speaks of the everlasting Jerusalem.

He speaks of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and says that the Lord will summon all the Gentiles thither for judgment, and the ancient Fathers understand that to refer to the Last Judgment. I do not condemn this interpretation, but hold, nevertheless, that Joel’s meaning is as follows, — As he calls the Christian Church the everlasting Jerusalem, so he calls it also the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for the reason that all the world is summoned to the Christian Church by the Word, and there is judged and punished by preaching, since all of them together are sinners before God. So Christ says, “The Spirit of truth shall punish the world because of sin.” For the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the valley of judgment. So, also, Hosea calls the Christian Church the Valley of Achor.