1:2 *Elders… all of you*- Often the Bible brackets the elders with all the ordinary people, thus emphasizing that God relates with individuals; His appeal isn’t merely to religious specialists or leaders, but to all of us.

1:12 If we lose joy, we have lost our faith. It was the same with Israel. “The vine [of Israel is] withered… for joy is withered”; the people of God were to be a people of joy, and when their joy was no more, they were no longer God’s people; for “joy and gladness” were cut off from the house of God (:16). The experience of joy is the litmus test for a community of God’s people. This thought gives rise to some sober self-examination, especially for those who may have come to feel that ‘holding the faith’ is a matter of glumly trudging onwards through this evil world, grimly gripping hold of our faith as we bemoan the state of those around us. To hold on to the Faith is described as holding on to the rejoicing of the hope unto the end (Heb. 3:6).

2:11 *His army*- The pagan armies were God’s in the sense that He controlled them. No evil can happen to us without God allowing it; our worst enemies are ultimately sent and permitted by Him. There is no personal Satan figure who controls these people; God is in total control.

2:13 *Relents*- Despite having spoken as if God’s judgment was inevitably going to come, Joel knew that God can state things and then change His planned judgments because He is so sensitive to human repentance. And so Joel calls for a fast, and for absolutely everyone in the community to repent and beg God for mercy. Even those in the process of marriage were to break off the ceremony (:16) and come to a special assembly (:15) to beg God to change His mind. Joel was so certain that God’s prophetic word would be fulfilled that he appealed to people with such urgency and insistence to repent, so that the prophesied judgments wouldn’t happen to them. Our belief in God’s word will likewise motivate our witness and impart a spirit of urgency to it which we couldn’t have if we weren’t so convinced that the prophecies will come true.

2:20 *Northern army*- Babylon and Assyria are spoken of in the Bible as the ‘northern’ invader, although they were situated to the East of Israel. This was because there was no easy way through the desert separating them from Israel, and travel was typically up the Fertile Crescent and then down into Israel from the north. Joel is quoted and alluded to in the New Testament as if these things will come true in the last days before Christ returns. Dan. 11:40-44 speak of a latter day “King of the north” invading Israel just before Christ’s coming. Geographically, Babylon and Assyria refer to what is today Iran and Iraq.

2:32 This passage is quoted in Acts 2:21-41 and interpreted as meaning that whoever calls upon themselves the Name of the Lord by baptism into His Name will be saved. People from many nations were baptized into the Name just before the ‘last day’ of Judah’s destruction in AD70 (:28). It would seem that this was but a primary fulfilment of what will happen just before the final ‘last day’ of Christ’s return. There will be a special preaching of the Gospel to all nations just before Christ returns (Mt. 24:14).

3:2 *Judgment on them there for My people*- The basis of judgment will be how individuals have treated God’s people, both natural and spiritual Israel. Jesus was very clear that how we treat the least of His brothers or sisters is how we treat Him, and He will judge people on this basis (Mt. 25:40).

3:9 *Sanctify war*- Declaring a holy war against Israel sounds like the Islamic *jihad*.

3:12-14 These verses seem to describe an invasion of Israel by many nations, resulting in them being destroyed in a valley in Israel; these verses are applied to the last days in the description of the battle of Armageddon in Rev. 16:16. God will be suddenly revealed in the Jerusalem area (:16), associated with His “mighty ones” “coming down” there (:11). Obadiah 21 speaks of the same situation. This surely refers to the return of Christ to earth from Heaven with His Angels with Him, and also the resurrection of His people, who will then also be His “mighty ones” with Him (1 Thess. 4:14; 2 Thess. 1:7). Jesus ascended to Heaven from Olivet, near Jerusalem, and the Angels promised that He would return to earth in the same way (Acts 1:11).