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Dear Associates and Friends,

January 2013

“[The Book of Joel](#)” is the title and subject of this month’s article by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. He begins by discussing the understanding of the Book of Joel presented by the apostle Peter at Pentecost. This may seem to be an unusual way of approaching an Old Testament book of the Bible, rather than going directly into the text of Joel itself, but Dr. Martin’s approach focuses on the importance of the message of Joel in Peter’s time, and to our future.

Peter thought that Jesus’ return would occur soon, surely within Peter’s own lifetime or shortly after. He was eventually informed that Christ’s return would not occur for a long time. This Mystery revelation came from God to Paul and others, and it was confirmed by events that occurred during the 40 years after Peter’s Pentecost sermon. These events demonstrated that God and Christ had more work for their *ekklesia* to do.¹

Nonetheless, Peter’s message was relevant in his time because Joel’s prophecy was applicable to the Day of Pentecost. Other parts of Joel’s prophecy have relevance to events future to us today; the events of “**the Day of YHWH,**” or as we commonly refer to it, “**the Day of the Lord.**”

The Book of Joel is the second prophetic book of the Book of the Twelve,² and it is the second of the seven Assyrian-period books. According to Professor James Nogalski, a leading scholar in the study of the Minor Prophets, the Book of the Twelve, the prophecies of Joel have an important function:

“Joel functions as the literary anchor for the entire corpus [of the Twelve Minor Prophets]. Joel begins with an extended call to repentance, precisely the way that Hosea ends; and it concludes with an eschatological portrayal of judgment against the nations, while Amos begins with an extended pronouncement of judgment against the nations. The fact that Joel 3:16, 18 contains the quotes from Amos 1:2 and 9:13 means that the end of Joel effectively cites the beginning and end of Amos.”

• **Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, Hosea–Jonah, p. 7, underlining mine**³

The Book of Joel establishes the first link of the Twelve Minor Prophets as a unified corpus of prophetic writings which were separated originally by time, space, and subject matter. They were purposely linked by someone (likely Ezra the Priest or the Sanhedrin⁴) who established connecting words from the end of one Book of the Twelve to the next Book of the Twelve. That pattern was established by the Book of Joel to establish and “lock” the Book of the Twelve into one work, compiled and linked by a brilliant editor.

There are four recurring themes throughout all of the Books of the Twelve, according to Nogalski:

¹ See Dr. Martin’s articles “[The History of the Revelation of the Mystery](#)” and “[The Mystery and the New Covenant](#)” which explain the historical background and significance of the Mystery and how it differs from the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

² Dr. Martin’s article “[The Minor Prophets for Today](#),” explains the order of each book of the Twelve Minor Prophets and how they are interrelated and even linked like a chain through word and phrase connections from one book to the next.

³ James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), p. 7. See also Nogalski, “Joel as Literary Anchor for the Book of the Twelve in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. By James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), pp. 91–109.

⁴ See “[Chapter 12: The Old Testament Periods of Canonization](#),” where Dr. Martin discusses Ezra’s role, along with that of the Great Sanhedrin, in the final canonization of the Old Testament. This chapter comes from Dr. Martin’s book, [Restoring the Original Bible: the Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures](#). This book is available complete online.

- (1) the theme of “the Day of YHWH,” which phrase occurs more frequently in the Twelve than anywhere else;
- (2) the theme of fertility of the land (fertility withheld or promised in abundance);
- (3) the theme of the fate of God’s people in light of their sins (life and death of the nation); and
- (4) the theme of theodicy, how God’s attributes are exemplified in His judgment and compassion, and His punishment and mercy.⁵

I hope you can begin to understand how important Joel is in establishing the connection with the first book, Hosea, and then Joel with the third book, Amos, so that readers and audiences listening to the reading of Joel (and the other prophecies) can anticipate other connections between the other books.

This is an example of the wondrous intricacy of the Word of God. It forms a matrix of interrelation of themes, and an intertextuality within the Book of the Twelve, but also intertextuality of individual books of the Minor Prophets with the books of the Major Prophets. Then there are the links and references in the New Testament. For example, Joel is referenced in Acts chapter 2 by Peter and by Paul in Romans 10:13. Such connections mean more than simple quotes or references, they are a validation by Peter and Paul that Joel has written truth — the Word of God — confirmed in the words of the apostles themselves.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counselor?”

• **Romans 11:33–34**

Some day we will understand how blessed we were to have the word of God available to us. It is a resource that none of us truly appreciate or properly use to learn the mind of God. We crave and would prefer to interact directly with the Living Word of God, Christ Jesus, as the apostles did, but God’s written word must suffice for now. This is what God has given us at this present time. Furthermore, our Father has determined that this is what is BEST for us at this time. Paul tells us what we should do with this ability to incorporate and input information from God’s mind to ours. Continuing from Romans chapter 11:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [test] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

• **Romans 12:2**

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⁵ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah*, pp. 11–13.