Moroni Expounds Old Testament Scriptures

Sidney B. Sperry
The prophecies given by Moroni to Joseph Smith come from Malachi, Isaiah, and Joel. The Malachi prophecies deal with the rise and restoration of the church, preparation for the millennium, and the significance of the sons of Levi. The Isaiah prophecies, explained in the Doctrine and Covenants, give a direct explanation of the millennium and Joseph’s own role in the preparation for it. The Joel prophecies have to do with the events just prior to the “great and terrible day of the Lord.”
Moroni Expounds Old Testament Scriptures

Abstract: The prophecies given by Moroni to Joseph Smith come from Malachi, Isaiah, and Joel. The Malachi prophecies deal with the rise and restoration of the Church, the preparation for the Millennium, and the significance of the sons of Levi. The Isaiah prophecies, explained in the Doctrine and Covenants, give a direct explanation of the Millennium and Joseph’s own role in the preparation for it. The Joel prophecies have to do with the events just prior to the “great and terrible day of the Lord.”

When the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith on that eventful evening of 21 September 1823, he quoted, among others, numerous Old Testament scriptures and proceeded to expound upon them. The Prophet did not make known the names and chapters of the various books quoted to him, with the exception of three. These consisted of part of Malachi 3 and all of Malachi 4, Isaiah 11, and Joel 2:28–32.

It seems to me that these three scriptures have not had—at least in certain respects—the detailed exposition that their importance merits. In this section, we shall treat Malachi 3–4.

Malachi 3–4

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that Moroni quoted only part of Malachi 3, but he did not stipulate which part. We therefore ask the interesting question, which verses of this chapter did

This previously unpublished lecture was presented at Brigham Young University around 1956.
Moroni quote? I am convinced that he quoted Malachi 3:1–3 and perhaps Malachi 3:4. What reasons may be given for this opinion? In the first place, if one examines Malachi 3, it will be found that 5–18 could not have been of first-rate importance to Moroni at the time he was speaking to the Prophet Joseph Smith, but Malachi 3:1–4 were, inasmuch as they had to do with events of the latter days. Again, Malachi 3:5–18 seem in great part to deal with infractions of the moral and religious code of Malachi’s own time. For these reasons, and others that will appear, we are confident that Moroni quoted at least the first three verses of this important chapter which read as follows:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap:

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. (Malachi 3:1–3)

Now what interpretation are we to place upon these passages? At the outset, we can agree that Moroni would not quote to the Prophet any other scriptures than those of tremendous import. We can also be assured that he appeared to the Prophet for the express purpose of explaining to him the significant events relative to the restoration and rise of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last dispensation, and more particularly the part that Joseph Smith himself was to play in these events. The above verses would, therefore, receive careful attention on the part of the angelic visitor. They refer to three or four striking events. In the first place, a messenger was to come and prepare the way before the Lord. Secondly, the Lord was to appear suddenly. Thirdly, his coming was to be one of purification and judgment. And lastly, he was to “purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may
offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Let us deal with these in the order given.

Who was the messenger to prepare the way before the Lord? Many commentators have held that this messenger was John the Baptist who fulfilled the scriptures by preparing the way before the Lord’s first coming as testified of in the Gospels. We have no fault to find with this explanation, except that John’s first appearance only partly fulfilled the scriptures. At this point we shall quote John 1:20-26, as contained in the so-called inspired revision of the Bible. The reader is urged to compare these parallels in the King James Version.

John 1:19-25 KJV

This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him; Who art thou?

And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John 1:20-26 JST

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him; Who art thou?

And he confessed, and denied not that he was Elias; but confessed, saying; I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, saying: How then art thou Elias? And he said; I am not that Elias who was to restore all things. And they asked him, saying, Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias.
And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

And they asked him, and said unto him; Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

And they who were sent were of the Pharisees.

And they asked him, and said unto him; Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias who was to restore all things, neither that prophet?

It will be noted in the above that John the Baptist did not deny that he was an Elias, but he explicitly denied that he was the Elias who was to come and restore all things. It should also be noted (John 1:24 JST) that he quoted Isaiah 40:3, and affirmed himself to be the “voice” crying in the wilderness as mentioned in that prophecy. If one examines this verse and its context, it is found that many of the events recorded therein could be fulfilled only in the latter days.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:1–5)

We should carefully observe in respect to the above that the warfare of Jerusalem is not yet accomplished, nor is her iniquity pardoned. Likewise the valleys have not yet been exalted, nor the mountains and hills made low. Neither has the glory of the Lord been revealed, and certainly all flesh has not seen it together. It is apparent, therefore, that John’s mission was only partly fulfilled in Christ’s day and could be fulfilled only at a later time. It is prob-
able that Moroni carefully explained all of this to the young Prophet Joseph Smith and pointed out to him that he would yet receive the keys of the Aaronic priesthood from the resurrected John the Baptist, who would come in due time and fulfill the second part of his mission in preparing the way before the Lord. Moroni would then reveal to Joseph the imminent advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was to come in his glory and rule for a thousand years over his saints, but before that day came, there should be great judgments in the earth, and more especially at his appearance; consequently, he would be as the scriptures say, "refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap" (Malachi 3:2). Here was a good opportunity to impress the Prophet with the importance of having the righteous people in the earth warned and prepared for the judgments to come.

And who were the sons of Levi mentioned in Malachi 3:3 who were to be purged as gold and silver that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness? Moroni undoubtedly explained who they were to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In Doctrine and Covenants 128:24 we apparently have the answer. When the Prophet wrote down this section of the Doctrine and Covenants, he was in a very exalted mood, as anyone can see by reading the whole section, especially Doctrine and Covenants 128:19–25. But to the verse in question.

Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation. (D&C 128:24)

The Latter-day Saints as a Church and a people seem to be the ones who are to offer up an offering in righteousness in the temple in the form of a book containing the records of our dead.
They are, therefore, the sons of Levi who are to be purged as gold and silver. When John the Baptist did come at a later time (15 May 1829) to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and conferred upon them the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, he made special mention of the fact that, “This [the Aaronic Priesthood] shall never again be taken from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” (D&C 13:1). John seems to have been especially concerned with the sons of Levi. Again in Doctrine and Covenants 84:31–34, we find material pertinent to Malachi’s prophecy:

Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses— for the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed—

And the sons of Moses and of Aaron shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, upon Mount Zion in the Lord’s house, whose sons are ye; and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church.

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

They become the sons of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (D&C 84:31–34)

In these verses it is again to be noted that the sons of Moses and of Aaron are to offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord. Those who hold the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods are indeed the sons of Levi and are the ones whom Malachi apparently had in mind when he gave his great prophecy. In making this statement, we do not wish to exclude any of the literal descendants of Levi who may later come in the Church and perform temple work. It is apparent then that Moroni began his explanation of temple work and of salvation for the dead in connection with Malachi 3, rather than with Malachi 4, as so many in the Church commonly suppose.
As indicated above, after Moroni quoted the three verses in Malachi and explained them, it would not be out of the way for him to quote Malachi 3:4, to the effect that “then shall the offering of Judea and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old.” In Malachi 4, Malachi made it plain, as doubtless Moroni explained, that the day would come that should burn as an oven and all who do wickedly should be stubble—speaking after the manner of the Lord. Here again, Moroni would naturally give words of warning relative to the impending judgments of God in the then near future. As the Prophet Joseph Smith states, Moroni quoted Malachi 4:5-6 somewhat differently than as found in our present Bible.

Behold, he will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. . . .

. . . And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

(Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39)

We are not to suppose, necessarily, that Moroni was quoting these verses of Malachi in the original, but rather that he was paraphrasing them in order to make it easier for the Prophet Joseph Smith to understand their significance. Otherwise, we should find it difficult to explain why the Savior in his appearance to the Nephites quoted them exactly as they are found in the King James Version. They point to the fact that Elijah, the last great prophet in ancient times to hold the keys of the sealing powers, should come to the earth and restore them so that it would be possible for the “sons of Levi,” whose sons we are, to have the privilege of entering into the temples and doing work for both the living and the dead.

It will not be necessary for us to expound in much further detail Malachi 4 as quoted by Moroni, because its significance is already well known to our people. Perhaps an explanation should be forthcoming as to the reasons why the earth should be smitten with a curse if Elijah did not come and restore the keys of his priesthood. We feel that the answer is relatively simple. This earth
was intended to provide an opportunity for the fullest possible progression of our Father's children. The dead could not be saved without the gospel ordinances being performed for them on the same basis as for the living. Without these saving ordinances, they could not enter into the Celestial Kingdom. The earth, therefore, could not be a heaven and fulfill her entire mission for her children as the Lord intended. We recall at this point the Savior's statement that "the meek shall inherit the earth" (3 Nephi 12:5; cf. Matthew 5:5). Elijah, as Moroni doubtless declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, was to come as a messenger to earth to prevent this tragedy and Joseph was to be the favored individual to receive his all-important keys.

Isaiah 11

It is a tribute to the importance of the book of Isaiah that Moroni quoted the whole of the prophecy in Isaiah 11 to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He then informed him that it was soon to be fulfilled. This is important for us as a Church and people to know and understand.

The chapter (so it seems to us) falls into three natural divisions. They are as follows: (1) Isaiah 11:1-5; (2) 6-10; and (3) 11-16. Of these three divisions, the last two are more appreciated by our people than the first. Because of its extreme importance and also because it has not yet been adequately treated, we shall quote the first division in its entirety.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. (Isaiah 11:1–5)

This section is hard for the average person to understand. Certainly it was necessary for Moroni to explain it to the young Prophet Joseph Smith. The explanation must have filled Joseph with surprise, because, in part, the prophecy refers directly to him.

The rod (Isaiah 11:1) that should come out of the stem of Jesse is none other, in my opinion, than Joseph Smith. The stem of Jesse spoken of is Christ. Isaiah 11:2 has reference to the spirit that should rest upon the Christ, to his wisdom, understanding, knowledge—let us say in general, his character. He is also spoken of as a judge (Isaiah 11:3–4), who should judge the poor with righteousness and who should, furthermore, smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips slay the wicked. In this respect, Isaiah, as Moroni would explain to the Prophet, antedated the predictions of Malachi in respect to judgments that should come upon this earth before, and at, the coming of our Lord in glory. In the judgments that were to be poured out upon the earth, righteousness should be the girdle of Christ’s loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins (Isaiah 11:5).

Now it may be asked by the inquiring reader, How do we know that the explanation just given is correct? We answer that the Lord has not left us without some statement of the important thoughts expressed in this passage of scripture, and this further confirms our opinion of its importance.

In Doctrine and Covenants 113, which is given in the form of questions and answers, we find the following:

Who is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah?

Verily thus sayeth the Lord: It is Christ.

What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse?

---

1 The reader may at first be tempted to say that this verse refers to Joseph Smith. However, a careful reading of what follows, especially Isaiah 11:4, will show such an interpretation to be impossible, since judgment belongs to Christ.
Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. (D&C 113:1–4)

It will be noted in these verses that, whereas the stem of Jesse spoken of is mentioned directly as the Christ, the rod spoken of is not identified by name, but a description is given, and it is left for the reader to discern the meaning. It is to be observed that the “rod” is an individual who is to serve in the hands of Christ and on whom much power is laid. We believe, as indicated above, that this servant is the Prophet Joseph Smith. The point is made much more certain by Doctrine and Covenants 113:5–6, which refer to Isaiah 11:10:

What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter?

Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days.

If we read all of these verses carefully, it will be noted that the rod spoken of in Isaiah 11:1 is the same as the root of Jesse spoken of in Isaiah 11:10. Let us ask ourselves the question, Who in this last dispensation rightly held the priesthood and the keys of the kingdom for an ensign and for the gathering of Israel in the last days? Can there be any question but that this individual who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim better describes the person of the Prophet Joseph Smith than any other? It is quite natural for us to suppose that the Prophet Joseph would not mention his own name directly in Doctrine and Covenants 113:4, 6. To our mind it seems strange that these important facts have not been widely expounded in the Church. The Old Testament abounds in great nuggets of wisdom and knowledge that deserve more attention on the part of our people.

The second section of Isaiah 11 has become famous because it has typified through the ages that golden era lying in the future, in which all men and the brute creation will be at peace. It gives in
beautiful poetic form an epitome of the state of the earth during the Millennial era, when contention and strife will be done away with, and when man will learn to arbitrate his differences and to wage war no more. In explaining this section to Joseph Smith, Moroni would of course repeat some things that he had said before, and point out that the work of the Church and of its elders should be directed to preparing the way for that ideal period when, under the leadership of the Christ, men will govern themselves and bring about the Lord's purposes on the earth. When that golden era comes, we can imagine Moroni saying, "Revelations from the Lord will make the earth as full of his knowledge as the waters cover the sea."

In this day of war and bloodshed, it is comforting to us as Latter-day Saints to know that Moroni explained and affirmed Isaiah's prediction, impossible as it seems of fulfillment at the present time.

In Isaiah 11:10, as already pointed out, "the root of Jesse," which is none other than Joseph Smith, was to be an ensign to the righteous people of the world. Him should the Gentiles seek out. We can appreciate the book of Isaiah all the more when it is realized that the mission of the great prophet of the latter days was foreseen in vision at least seven hundred years before the coming of Christ in the flesh.

The third section, Isaiah 11:11–16, deals with a subject that was once more widely taught in the Church than at present. It concerns the gathering of Israel. This section has reference to the second gathering of Israel; the first having taken place in the days of Moses, who was the last prophet to hold the keys of gathering. Moroni would naturally point out to the Prophet Joseph Smith that Israel must be gathered again in order to be rightly taught, in order that the missionaries might be sent into the world, and also for the purpose of doing temple work. The part that Moses would play in restoring the keys of gathering would also be discussed. Without the gathering, it would be practically impossible for the Lord to carry on his work.

It may be of interest to Bible students to note the peculiar way in which Isaiah speaks of the gathering of Israel. He points out that Israel should be gathered "from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from
Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11). This statement has left many of our people in a state of bewilderment because, as they point out, Israel in general has not come from the countries mentioned by Isaiah, but from England, Scotland, Wales, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and other European countries, as well as from the United States and the islands of the sea. But let us suppose that Isaiah had mentioned these latter countries, would it have meant more to his people? They did not know the complete geography of the world, and such names would have been meaningless to them, whereas the names that Isaiah gave were well known, and the idea could quite as well be conveyed by the use of them, as by means of modern geographical names.

It is important to remember in the study of prophecy that very often—in fact nearly always—a prophet speaks in terms that will be readily understood by the people of his own day. Therefore, the countries mentioned by Isaiah are symbolic of the countries of the latter days from which Israel was, or will be, gathered.

We can say that Moroni summarized for the Prophet Joseph Smith the main teachings of this chapter, which deal with the personal mission of Joseph Smith; the character and work of Jesus Christ, whose advent was to be in the near future; and with the restoration of the keys of the gathering of Israel, which should prepare the way for the great millennial era, when Christ will reign over the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Joel

The third Old Testament scripture quoted by Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith was part of the book of Joel. The Prophet makes the following statement about it: "He [Moroni] also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be." These verses read as follows:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.
And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.
And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. (Joel 2:28–32)

It is an interesting fact that in the Hebrew Bible the verses quoted by Moroni form a separate chapter by themselves, as the book of Joel is there divided into four chapters, rather than three, as in the King James Version. Moroni’s statement to the Prophet that these verses were not yet fulfilled is of more than passing interest to us, because they were also quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost to the multitude round about, and interpreted in terms of the unusual situation confronting him. Referring to the speaking in tongues that took place then, Peter said, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). We are at a loss to understand whether Peter meant Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on that occasion, or whether the situation was similar to that spoken of by Joel. If Peter actually meant that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, we shall have to differ with him because Moroni, the divine Messenger, expressly declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith that “this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be” (Joseph Smith–History 1:41).

It has always been surprising to me that after one hundred and ten [one hundred and sixty-five] years of Church history, our people have made few, if any, serious attempts to expound the book of Joel and determine its full meaning. It stands to reason that the prophecy must be of great importance, or Moroni would not have quoted parts of it to the young prophet.

I believe that the gist or general meaning of the prophecy can easily be determined by reason of Moroni’s words to Joseph. Let us postulate eight points with respect to the prophecy and discuss them.
1. In general, the book of Joel refers to the events that are to take place prior to the second advent of our Lord and to the peaceful condition of Israel thereafter.

2. The locust plague and other events mentioned in Joel 1 represent general destruction and mourning on the earth prior to “the day of the Lord” mentioned in Joel 1:15.

3. Joel 2:1–11. Further judgments. Note the reference to the “day of the Lord is great and very terrible” in Joel 2:11.

4. Joel 2:12–17. This constitutes a plea to the Lord’s people for repentance and reform.

5. Joel 2:17–27. The Lord is to take pity on his people and bless them.

6. Joel 2:28–32. These verses, which were quoted by Moroni, indicate that great signs and wonders are to be given preceding the “great and terrible day of the Lord” mentioned in Joel 2:31. They also indicate that great spiritual blessings are to be given to the Lord’s people in that day. We can assume that a great part of this scripture yet awaits fulfillment.

7. Joel 3:1–15, 19. Israel is to be gathered and retribution is to come upon her enemies by the judgments of God.


I am of the firm opinion that most of the book of Joel has reference to the latter days and has little or nothing to do with events of Joel’s own day, as so many scholars have assumed. In order to grasp the full spirit of the book, it is necessary to read it many times and ponder over it—that is the best way to acquire a testimony of its importance and to understand why Moroni used it in teaching the Prophet Joseph Smith the part he was to play in the world. It should be remembered that Joel was a Hebrew and that one ought to find in his prophecy idioms and allusions peculiar to his own day, even when he was referring to the future. Thus in Joel 1, and particularly Joel 1:4, an allusion is made to a locust plague. Most scholars assume that it has reference to an event in the land of Palestine of Joel’s day, because that land is ravaged periodically by the locusts. If the reader is interested, he should obtain a copy of the National Geographic Magazine for December 1915. There Mr. John D. Whiting gives a very vivid description of Jerusalem’s locust plague of that year. Other plagues are
known to have overtaken portions of Palestine also in the years 1845, 1892, 1899, and 1904. In view of these facts, it is quite natural for scholars to give a literal interpretation of Joel's prophecy in the sense that it had reference to Joel's own people and time. The reader will notice allusions also to "priests," to "the new wine," "the oil," "the virgin girded with sackcloth," etc.

However, in our opinion, such allusions are to be expected, even when a prophet is referring to events that are to occur in other lands, and to a time far removed from his own. As pointed out in the previous section, a prophet almost always speaks in terms of events and customs of his own day to describe events that belong to the future. In general this must be so, because he is a part of his own times. In light of this, I would ask the reader to go carefully over Joel I and note the unusual severity of the great destructions and difficulties that are spoken of there. Surely these do not refer to events that took place in Joel's day (note especially Joel 1:18-20). Furthermore, we call the reader's attention to Joel 1:15 where it speaks of "the day of the Lord" which should come as "a destruction from the Almighty." This expression must refer to the same event as "the terrible day of the Lord" mentioned in Joel 2:31, as quoted to Joseph Smith by Moroni. Since this day had not yet come, as Moroni indicated to the Prophet, is it not reasonable to suppose that it has reference to the second advent of our Lord which is even yet future?

That this interpretation is correct is made doubly sure by the fact that in discussing Malachi 3, Moroni made clear to the Prophet Joseph Smith that the expression "who may abide the day of his coming?" had reference to the coming of our Lord in power and great glory. Consequently, we can do no other than conclude that Joel I also has reference to the great destructions that are to take place prior to our Lord's coming.

A careful examination of Joel 2:1-27 will reveal again the same mournful note and message of alarm that is indicated in Joel I. Note Joel's pleas (Joel 2:12-17) for the repentance of God's people at that future day, for the "day of the Lord is great

---

2 See above, pages 269-74.
and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:11). It will also be noted (Joel 2:17–27) that if the Lord’s people will repent, the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats [vats] shall overflow with wine and oil. And [he] will restore to you the years that the locusts hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your god that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. (Joel 2:24–26)

All of these things were doubtless explained by Moroni to his young listener, and one can easily see, in the light of the interpretation given, the place and importance of the book of Joel to our people. It is interesting to note the allusion made by the Prophet Joseph Smith to the prophecy of Joel:

But behold, I say unto you that before this great day [the second advent of Christ] shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath. (D&C 29:14)

Note also Doctrine and Covenants 29:15–21 and the following:

And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath. And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke.
And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven.
And the remnant shall be gathered unto this place;
And then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory, with the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off.
(D&C 45:39-44)

It will also be instructive to read Doctrine and Covenants 43:24-39. These references in the Doctrine and Covenants, so it seems to us, further affirm the interpretations so far given of the book of Joel.

The third and last chapter of the prophecy makes reference to the latter days when Israel is to be gathered. Reference is also made to the Gentile nations who shall be judged because they have scattered Israel and “parted my land and have cast lots for my people” (Joel 3:2-3). Retribution shall come upon all of Israel’s enemies and the judgments of the Lord will aid in the redemption of his people. Then, in similar vein to Isaiah 11:6-10, shall come a time of peace and rejoicing and prosperity when “the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord” (Joel 3:18), and Judah is to “dwell forever,” and Jerusalem from “generation to generation” (Joel 3:20).

Let us summarize by saying that the book of Joel, much like the other Old Testament prophecies quoted by Moroni, has reference to coming judgments upon the nations, to the blessings that are to come to the Lord’s people if they will repent, to the signs and wonders that are to be shown in the earth and in the heavens, to the glorious advent of our Lord, and to the blessed state of Israel thereafter. As a people, we ought to appreciate more fully this Old Testament prophecy at the present time, because the signs seem to point to the fact that the Lord’s hand is upon the nations, and, unless they repent, the inevitable end is near.