

Joel

“The Day of the Lord”

I. Introduction to Joel

Joel is the 29th book of the Bible and the second among the Minor Prophets. Joel has three chapters and contains 73 verses. It can easily be read in one sitting. “His pen-pictures of the plague-stricken land, the invading locust-army, and the final gathering of all nations to the valley of judgment, are miniature masterpieces of graphic vigor.” (J. Sidlow Baxter)

Joel’s name means “Jehovah is God”. He called himself the “son of Pethuel.” Beyond this, we know nothing of his personal life, except that he ministered as a prophet to Judah in the 9th Century B.C.

Although some argument exists regarding the dating of the book of Joel, it seems from content he was one of the earliest, perhaps even first, among the writing prophets.

II. Outline of Joel

Joel divides into three sections all based on “The Day of the Lord” mentioned four times (Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, and 3:14). The book divides as follows:

Section 1 Chapter 1 – immediate judgment: the present condition in Judah

Section 2 Chapter 2:1-17 – imminent judgment: the near future

Section 3 Chapter 2: - 3:21 – ultimate judgment: the distant future

Joel gives valuable insight into the “Day of the Lord”. He speaks of what will lead up to it, how it will begin, and when it will end.

David Guzik states: “Many have the wrong idea of the “last days,” thinking only in terms of the final years or months immediately before the return of Jesus in glory to this earth, or the rapture of the Church. Scripturally, we can think of the last days as an era, one that began with the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Since that time, the Church has not been rushing towards a distant edge that represents the consummation of all things. Instead, at the Day of Pentecost, the Church came to the edge - and has run parallel to the brink for some 2,000 years.”

Section 1 Chapter 1

“Has anything like this happened in your days or even in the days of your fathers?”

In Chapter 1 Verse 1 Joel is exhorting the people to look at the current events and see them in light of what the Word of God teaches. We need to always look at our world in light of Revelation. Whatever you are facing, look into the Word for guidance; look at the present condition of this world in light of prophesy.

In 1990 an eighty year old pastor declared “60 years ago you had to scratch around like a chicken to find one sign of the Lord’s soon return. But today there are so many signs I am no longer looking for them, now I am listening for the found of the trumpet.”

Anyone who honestly looks at the world through the lens of prophesy will see we are living in a unique period of human history. What are the signs that we are living in the end times?

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Spiritual Signs:

False Christ's; claims that salvation is not through Christ
False doctrine
Lukewarm church

Cultural Signs:

2 Timothy 3:1-4 “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God . . .”

Natural Signs:

Luke 21:11 “And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.”
The world attributes the rise in tornado, tsunami, and hurricane activity to “global warming” or “climate change”. The Bible attributes these same events to signs of the end of days.

Political Signs

Wars and rumors of wars: the 20th Century was the most violent century in human history.

Globalism

Israel: Balfour Declaration November 2, 1919. After WWI the Ottoman Empire was divided. The portion including Palestine (former name for province including Israel) was given to England. The Balfour Declaration, issued by Britain's Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, declared that it was the intention of the British government to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people.

Since 1917 the world has witnessed the fulfillment of Balfour's desire and Biblical prophesy, in the foundation of the State of Israel.

May 14, 1948 the nation of Israel was birthed

June 7, 1967 Jerusalem was occupied

We need to see and understand that we are living in a unique time in human history as the signs of Christ's return are unfolding before our eyes.

Joel 1:3 “Tell your children about it. . .” Joel places the responsibility of passing on Biblical truth on the parents. The church, youth group, children's ministries all play an important role in a child's spiritual development, but the primary responsibility rests with the parents.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Moses instructs “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Devotions are important, but devotion is what is lacking in most homes.”

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Joel 1:4 “What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.” Joel is describing the four stages of locust development and the conditions left in Judah as a result of a locust swarm. These swarms are not uncommon, but this was unique due to its enormous devastation and it was a form of judgment on the backslidden nation of Judah.

J.S. Baxter describes the effect of swarms in this excerpt from Commentary on Joel.

“The young locusts rapidly attain the size of the common grasshopper, and proceed in one and the same direction, first crawling, and at a later period leaping, as they go, devouring every green thing that lies in their path. They advance more slowly than a devouring fire, but the ravages they commit are scarcely inferior or less to be dreaded. Fields of standing wheat and barley, vineyards, mulberry orchids, and groves of olive, fig, and other trees are in a few hours deprived of every green blade and leaf, the very bark being often destroyed. . . . When a wall of a house lies in their way, they climb straight up, going over the roof to the other side, and blindly rush in at the open doors and windows. When they come to water, be it a mere puddle or a river, a lake or the open sea, they never attempt to go around it, but unhesitatingly leap in and are drowned, and their dead bodies, floating on the surface, form a bridge for their companions to pass over. The scourge thus often comes to an end, but as often happens; the decomposition of millions of insects produces pestilence and death. History records a remarkable instance which occurred in the year 125 before the Christian era. The insects were driven by the wind into the sea in such vast numbers that their bodies, being driven back by the tide upon the land, caused a stench which produced a fearful plague whereby eighty thousand persons perished in Libya, Cyrene, and Egypt.”

Joel uses this backdrop of the condition in Judah to call the people to a six step program.

Joel 1:5-7 Awake

Stop doing what you’re doing and get things right with God. Drunkenness was one of their chief sins.

Paul uses the term “Awake” to stir a threefold response:

Ephesian 5:14 is a call to trust Christ for salvation

Romans 13:11 is a call for believers to the reality that time is running out and to live for the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15:34 is a call to righteous behavior and to depart from sin

Joel 1:8-10 Lament

Stop looking at sin for the pleasure it brings, but for the suffering it causes.

Matthew 5:4 Jesus declares true happiness is found when we mourn over sin.

The intensity of our mourning is illustrated by a virgin bride losing her husband perhaps on the wedding day.

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Joel 1:11-12 Be Ashamed

Shame – A painful emotion caused by guilt; key word, guilt. God wants the people to realize they are guilty of defying His word. Two aspects of guilt:

Feeling guilty – When we do something wrong our conscience plagues us with feelings of guilt. These feelings are designed by God to bring a change in behavior. It has become common today, instead of changing behavior, to simply attempt to remove feelings of guilt. Often counseling, medication, or substance abuse is employed to help us feel better about what we are doing. If you are involved in extra-marital affairs, no medication or counsel will make your behavior okay with God. The solution is to be ashamed and turn back to God.

Not sleeping because of the guilt of what you are doing on the internet? The solution is not a sleeping pill, but repentance.

Being guilty – Regardless of how a person may feel, when he violates the ways of God, he is guilty. If sin does not make you feel bad, it does not mean you are not guilty, but that your conscience is being seared and your heart is hardening.

Joel 1:14 Consecrate a Fast

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence of things which are not in themselves sinful, in order to sharpen our focus on the Lord. The most common fast is food, but a person could fast from anything to give more attention to the Lord. The purpose of a fast is to put a greater emphasis on relationship with the Lord.

Joel 1:14b Call an Assembly

The calendar year for Israel was based on seven feasts spread through three seasons. These feasts were designed to assemble the people for worship, prayer, the Word, and a deeper commitment to the Lord. Throughout Israel's history, each time the nation gathered for these feasts it resulted in personal commitment and national reform. As believers it is critical that we establish regular times to gather and worship with the people of God. After exhorting the people to change, Joel reacts to the darkening condition of his world by crying out to God.

It is important to keep in mind that the hope for the world has been entrusted to the Christian in the form of the Gospel.

Section 2 Chapter 2:1 – 27: Imminent Judgment

Chapter 2 begins the second section of Joel. Here, using the backdrop of a locust plague, Joel predicts the coming of a nation that will overthrow the nation of Judah.

Joel 2:2 He describes them as a great and strong people, moving with devastating force and speed, who are unstoppable. This is also a picture of the coming “Day of the Lord”.

Joel 2:2 – 17 Another plea to turn to God. J. S. Baxter calls this “An 11th hour plea.”

Joel 2:18 – 27 A promise is given to those who respond to Joel's plea. The pinnacle of the promise is found in Joel 2:25, “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”

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Section 3 Chapter 2:28 – 3:21 Ultimate Judgment

The final section of Joel speaks of the “Day of the Lord.” Keep in mind, the locust plague of Chapter 1 and the Babylonian captivity of Chapter 2; both illustrate the coming “Day of the Lord”,

Joel 2:28 Sometime after the Babylonian captivity, the “Day of the Lord” will come.

The “Day of the Lord” will begin with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and conclude with the return of Christ.

During the time between Pentecost and the return of Christ, all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Joel 3:1-17 Joel describes the ultimate judgment that awaits those who rebel against God and reject His Savior.

Joel calls the place the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat means “God will judge”.

Joel calls the place the “valley of decision.” The decision we make regarding Christ, will determine whether or not we face judgment.

There is no place in Israel called “Valley of Jehoshaphat.” Joel is speaking of Armageddon.

God is often accused of wrong-doing when the Bible speaks of judgment. However, it would be wrong for Him to fail to judge sin. Righteousness requires it and the heart of man cries out for it. Even today, we are outraged when the wicked go unpunished.

A day is coming when God will judge sin and only those who have trusted Christ will be acquitted.

Joel 3:18 – 21 in this final section, God promises restoration to His people. In Ephesians 1:10 Paul the dispensation of the fullness of times” Protestant minister, preacher and medical doctor, Martin Lloyd-Jones called it “God’s ultimate purpose.”

God desires to gather all mankind into glory, to experience the riches of His grace.

III. Why Study Joel

Joel has been called the Prophet of Pentecost, for he promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost; recorded in Acts 2.

Joel declared fascinating things about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Poured out – not given in a limited amount, but overflowing.

On all flesh – no longer on only a few special people, but all who would believe in Christ and ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. No distinction would be made between male, female, rich, or poor.

Gifts would be given – while many more gifts are listed in the New Testament, Joel mentions three that specifically have to do with god speaking to us.

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IV. Types of Christ

Jesus is the one who pours out the Spirit.

Jesus will come to complete the “Day of the Lord.”

Jesus is the name we must call upon for salvation.