

MINOR PROPHETS

Session_3_JOEL - Introduction and Chapter 1

Joel - “Son of Pethuel” is self identified. Joel means “Jehovah is God”. Pethuel means “openheartedness of / toward God”. Not much known about Joel - his father is only mentioned here. The context would suggest that Joel was a Judean near the area of Jerusalem. The actual date of authorship is speculation based upon canonical position, historical hints and linguistic characteristics.

950	900	850	800	750	700	650	600	550	500	450	400
EGYPT			ASSYRIA				BABYLON		PERSIA		
N & S KINGDOMS			JUDAH			EXILE		POST - EXILE			
★ Solomon Dies			★ Israel Falls			★ Judah Falls		★ Captives Return			
Major Prophets			Isaiah			Jeremiah / Lam. Daniel Ezekiel					
Minor Prophets		Obadiah Joel	Jonah Amos Hosea	Micah	Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk			Haggai Zechariah	Malachi		
Other Prophets & OT Books		Elijah Elisha						Esther Ezra Nehemiah			

The best guess at the date range of writing is somewhere between 835 B.C.-796 B.C. during the reign of Joash based on the following details:

- Unlike many other prophets, Joel doesn’t mention any of the major world empires that rise in the later years (Assyria, Babylon or Persia).
- His style more closely resembles that of Hosea and Amos than that of the exilic / post - exilic prophets.
- Some examples of parallels with Amos are: Amos 1:2 compared to Joel 3:16; Amos 9:13 compared with Joel 3:18.
- The date of the writing is irrelevant to the message.



Plague of Locusts

Using the backdrop of a recent, real plague of locusts that had been sent by God for judgment, Joel moves on to describe the very real and amplified judgment of God to come using the locust plague as an illustration.

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The Day of the Lord

The “Day of The Lord” phrase is the theme in Joel (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). It is used 19 times by 8 different authors (Is 2:12; 13:6,9; Eze 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Am 5:18, 20; Ob 15; Zep 1:7,14; Zec 14:1; Mal 4:5) in the OT and by Paul (1Cor 5:5; 1Thes 5:2; 2Thes 2:2) and Peter (2Pe 3:10) in the NT.

The phrase can sometimes refer to near judgment events to be experienced by Israel (Eze 13:5) - but ultimately the phrase is used to refer to the extraordinary display of God’s power to be experienced by all mankind; both enemies (judgment) and His people (deliverance); (1Thes 5; 2Thes 2)

The events of God’s judgment on the nations, including the terrible events just prior to His return, are also a theme in Jesus’s teachings in the gospels (Matt 24; Lk 17; 21). The Revelation of Jesus Christ written by John is the most detailed writing concerning the “great tribulation” (6-19) - See also Daniel (2;7;9).

The Day of The Lord is often accompanied by:

- Seismic disturbances (2:1-11; 2:31; 3:16)
- Violent weather (Eze 13:5)
- Clouds and thick darkness (2:2; Zep 1:7)
- Cosmic upheaval (2:3,30)

Some interpretive challenges arise as Peter ties in certain acts of the Holy Spirit upon God’s people discussed in Joel (2:28-32) with the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) - which we will discuss when there).

The first advent of Christ gave glimpses into the final day (blessings and judgement), but the day of the Lord will have it’s climax at two points: Armageddon & the return of King Jesus and the White Throne judgment - with the Millennial reign in between.

OUTLINE

- I. Day of the Lord Experienced: Historical (1:1-20)
 - A. Source of the Message (1:1)
 - B. Command to Contemplate the Devastation (1:2-4)
 - C. Completeness of the Devastation (1:5-12)
 - D. A Call to Repent Considering the Devastation (1:13-20)
- II. Day of the Lord: Transitional (2:1-17)
 - A. Alarm Sounds (2:1)
 - B. Army Invades (2:2-11)
 - C. Admonition to Repent (2:12-17)
- III. Day of the Lord: Eschatological (2:18-3:21)
 - A. Introduction (2:18-20)
 - B. Material Restoration (2:21-27)
 - C. Spiritual Restoration (2:28-32)
 - D. National Restoration (3:1-21)

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1) "The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:"

Joel's message is directly from God. The phraseology means "the word of Jehovah took possession of Joel". It is a common phrase used by other prophets to give divine authority as the source of the message (Hos1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1 - variations of (1Sa 15:10; 2Sam 24:11; Her 1:2; Eze 1:3; Jon 1:1; Zec 1:1; Mal 1:1)

2-3) "Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation."

The terms "hear this" and "give ear" are legal terms that are associated with an indictment and sentence given upon the perpetrator (Is 1:2; His 4:1). Joel is passing on the sentence of God upon His people. Being addressed to the Elders and all inhabitants is addressing all who would have responsibility for leading God's people; ei. passing down knowledge to their children. This has happened in the past - far enough that the children don't know; near enough that the elders and adults know

This is enforced by how it is reiterated three times; repeat to subsequent generations - that they never forget (Ex 10:1-6; Deut 4:9; 6:6-7; 11:19; Pss 78:5-7; 145:4-7; Prov 4:1)



4) "What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten."

This was describing the worst plague that Israel experienced since what they witnessed in Egypt (Ex 10:14).

It is most important to recognize the repeated succession of the locusts resulting in total devastation; there is nothing left. In their swarms they eat even the roots under ground. Their gnawing can be heard at night.

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4 types of locusts may either be speaking to 4 different species or stages of development.

- Gnawing locusts (gazam) - early stage in Spring; no wings out of egg
- Swarming Locusts (arbeh) - Winged; most common. Scientists have discovered a hormone that causes the swarming.
- Creeping Locusts (Chaciyl) - “caterpillar” - 3rd phase; old skin, small wings
- Stripping Locusts (yekeq) - “cankerworm” 3” long with 1” antennae

The number 4 shows up in other patterns of judgment; speaks to totality (Jer 15:3; Ezek 14:21; 4 horseman of Rev).



Locust swarms can be as dense as 120 million / SqMi.

They can fly 17 hours at a time and have been spotted 1200 mi. out at sea.

In 1889 a swarm over the Red Sea covered 2000 SqMi.

Their swarms can form clouds that “darken” the sky; their flight creates wind-like noise.

Wake Up!

5) "Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth."

Wine is a sign of prosperity, joy in celebration, ease of times. It is the first to be destroyed.

Notice the call to attention - “awake” they had been completely unaware of the anger of the Lord that had heaped up against them in their sin. God was calling them to were to mourn over their sin.

6-7) "For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white."

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A nation - In the context of chapter 1, this is most likely still referring to locust's. With the utter devastation the locusts left in their wake, it may as well been a conquering nation. Other places referred to in human terms (Prov 30:25-27; ant & locust). As the swarm is depicted as one force; a nation, "it's" is now used to describe the swarm with the power of a lion and lioness - turns away from no one.

Notice the ownership of the Lord = "my land"; even in judgment the Lord still claims ownership - it's His land (Lv 25:23; Nu36:2Eze 38:16). He owns the fig tree and the vine (Hos 2:9). In times of fruitfulness they serve a significant sign of god's favor, (1Ki 4:25; Mic 4:4; Zec 3:10) but when stripped bare they serve as judgment.

8) *"Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth."*

God is often depicted as the husband of Israel; she, His wife (Is 54:5-8; Her 31:32). The metaphor speaks of a wife mourning the loss of her husband while they are young and not long married (prob. 1st year) by the use of the term "virgin" - "wail" like this - Again repentance is in mind.

9) *"The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD."*

Joel moves to the priesthood - the religious aspect of His people; No way to offer sacrifices for sin. Without belief in Jesus as the Christ and no temple sacrificial system in place, Israel has no way to atone for sin today!

10-12) *"The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes. Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man."*

Outside of the religious activities harvests were a major part of the identity of Israel. They were linked to the feasts and every part of society was reliant on it.

The locust plague caused all vegetation to be destroyed. Literally all reasons to be joyful were gone.

A Call To Repentence!

13) *"Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God."*

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Sackcloth - a coarse garment generally made of goats hair, black or dark in color (Rev 6:12). It was often used in the ancient world to express deep sorrow, repentance or a call to repentance (Ne 9:1; Is 37:1; Mt 11:21). The order of responsibility: The Priest and ministers first. They are to lead the congregation into repentance.

14) "Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD."

This was to be a congregation wide fast. "Solemn assembly" speaks to the severity of the situation. The calling of assembly was associated with the sacrificial system and a time of deep consideration of sin and Gods forgiveness (ei. Lv 23:36; Nu 29:35; Dt 16:8). They were also called to assemble at the giving of the law (Ex 19; 20).

15) "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes."

This is the first use of the term "the day of the Lord". Later it will be used to refer to the inevitable day that God will deal out wrath to the nations just prior to and including the day of Jesus's return. Here it is used to warn God's people of the impending judgment on them. God has already dealt them a devastating blow but they will certainly face worse if they fail to repent.

In chapter 2 the intensity in description seems to change from the locusts that have already been. Perhaps used as a metaphor of a future large invasion. It is no doubt tied into the future ultimate day of the Lord when he brings the day of natural man's reign to a close with the second advent and the reign of Jesus. The locust plague in Revelation 9 is depicted as coming out of the pits of the abyss:

"And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon." [Rev 9:9-11 ESV]

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In this case the locusts are described as “having a king over them” - “Abaddon; Appollyon” but Proverbs 30:27, in speaking of natural locusts, says they “have no king”.

It is possible that Joel may have been describing this army in his escalation of judgement imagery when speaking of the future, final day of the Lord.

4 DAYS / AGES

There are 4 “days” = ages / times depicted in scripture:

The day of man - “natural” after the fall -kingdoms of the “earth bound”

The Day of Christ - 1st advent and the church (1Cor 1:7,8; 5:5; 2Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16) climax = rapture Jhn 14:1-3

The day of the Lord - Daniels 70th week; the “hour of testing which is about to come on the whole world (Rev 3:10); Described in Rev 6-19 climax= return of Jesus to reign as King; the Millennium! (Ps 2) Rule with a rod of iron.

The day of God - The final destruction of this current creation & white throne judgment (2 Pe 3:12; Rev 20:11); new heavens and earth and eternal reign (Rev 21)

Paul sums up the resurrection this way:

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." [1Co 15:22-28 ESV]

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16-20) "Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods; the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are torn down because the grain has dried up. How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed because there is no pasture for them; even the flocks of sheep suffer. To you, O LORD, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness."

In these final verses of chapter 1 Joel points out how even the animals & all of nature suffer as a result of the wrath of God that man has brought about.

The main point to keep in mind - God is in control of all events - He has told us in advance!

Repentance has an impact on these movements (ei. Jonah & Nineveh; the future restoration of Israel through the repentant remnant).

Joel leads by example "To you, Oh Lord, I call"

Our nation today ? - Our own homes?