

Pastor's Bible Study

“Almost” Everything You Need to Know About ...”

The Book of Joel

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 6:30 p.m. Online

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

- Joel's name is the same as Elijah meaning “My God is the Lord”.
- Not much is told about Joel who is also referred to as a poet.
- Joel's audience is the people of Judah.
- We immediately meet a swarm of locusts, then are led through a bitter lamentation for the “day of the Lord”, priests weep and then we hear of a promised joy.
- Recurring theme is judgment and repentance.
- Priest, also called “ministers” are given the role of lamenters, while the people have a role to repent.
- Chapter 2, verse 28, has men and women prophesying – one of the few places in the Old Testament where women prophets are mentioned.

MESSAGE

- The invaders have come as punishment so Israel must repent and fast.
- The “day of the Lord” has come when the Lord will see to it that all His promises will be fulfilled whether for punishment or for prosperity.
- If Israel repents and returns to the Lord the enemy will fall and their lands will be fertile forever.

CHAPTER 1

- V1-12 Call to Lament
- V13-20 Call to Repentance and Prayer

1. *The land laid waste is spoken of as a judgement without precedent.*

²Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors?

- The judgment had arrived in the form of 4 kinds of locusts which equal 4 types of invasions.
- Many commentators believe the locusts were literally human armies.

2. *All people sharing in the calamity are called on to lament it.*

⁸Mourn (lament) like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the betrothed of her youth. ⁹Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in

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mourning, those who minister before the LORD. ¹⁰ The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the olive oil fails.

- Lamenting was often done by the women.
- Judgment will come.

3. *They are directed to look to God in their lamentations.*

¹³ Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴ Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. ¹⁵ Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

- The invasion of the armies disrupted service at the temple.

CHAPTER 2

- V1-11 The Day of the Lord is Near
- V12-17 A Renewed Call to Repentances
- V18-27 The Lord's Answer
- V28-32 The Day of the Lord

1. *A further description of that future terrible desolation in the land of Judah. God's judgment.*

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come.”

- Commentary: When we are right with God, we *want* **the day of the LORD**. We long for Him to show His strength because we know that we abide in Him. When we are not right with God, we *dread* **the day of the LORD**, because when God shows Himself strong, His strength may work *against* us. In Joel's day Judah was not right with God, so **the day of the LORD** would be nothing but **darkness and gloominess** to them.

2. *A serious call to the people under this judgment.*

¹² “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart with fasting and weeping and mourning.” ¹³ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending

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calamity. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

- Commentary: Spurgeon tells the story of a woman who came seeming to be in great sorrow, saying what a great sinner she was, but Spurgeon suspected her repentance wasn't sincere. He said, “Well, if you are a sinner of course you have broken God's laws. Let's read the Ten Commandments and see which ones you have broken.” They started at the first: “You shall have no other gods before Me,” and Spurgeon asked her if she ever broke that commandment. “Oh no,” she said, “not that I know of.” ““You shall not make any graven image’ – did you ever break that one?” “Never, sir,” she answered. As you might suppose, Spurgeon went through all Ten Commandments and she could not find a single one that she had broken, and what he suspected was true. She didn't really consider herself a sinner, and she was making a show of repentance because she thought it was expected of her.

3. *A promise that after repentance, God would remove the judgment.*

²⁵ “**I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten (familiar text)** — the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm— my great army that I sent among you.

²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.”

- Commentary: “It will strike you at once that the locusts did not eat the years: the locusts ate the fruits of the years' labor, the harvests of the fields; so that the meaning of the restoration of the years must be the restoration of those fruits and of those harvests which the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time; but there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours.” (Spurgeon)

4. *A prediction of the Messiah's kingdom in the world.*

²⁸ “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

³² And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

- Commentary: The Old Testament has a rich record of the work of the Spirit, but He was not poured out **on all flesh** under the Old Covenant. Instead, certain men were filled with the Spirit at certain times and only for certain duties. Here, Joel looked forward to the

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glorious New Covenant, when the Spirit of God would be poured out **on all flesh**. Why, even **your sons and daughters**, **your old men**, and **your young men** would be filled with the Spirit of God... This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples gathered in the upper room, waiting in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised would come ([Acts 1:4-5](#)).

CHAPTER 3

- V1-16 The Nations Judged
- V17-21 The Glorious Future of Judah

1. *God reckoning with the enemies of His people.*

3 In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (The Lord Judges). There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

- Commentary: Judgment is about the only aspect of God's plan of the ages that is plainly logical. The grace and mercy of God is not plainly logical. Salvation by grace through faith is not plainly logical. The high standing and destiny of the believer in Jesus is not plainly logical. Judgment – God simply giving those who reject Him what they deserve – *is plainly logical*.

2. *God judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full.*

¹²“Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. ¹³Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow— so great is their wickedness!”

- [Psalm 2](#) beautifully expresses the folly of the nations and the triumph of the LORD: Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision (mockery, disdain). Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion” ([Psalm 2:1-6](#)).

3. *The provision God has made for the refreshing of His people.*

“In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias.^[d]¹⁹ But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the

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people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. ²⁰Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations. ²¹ Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.” The LORD dwells in Zion!

- God will show mercy to His people and grant them forgiveness. This prophecy of Joel, which began with the desperate plague of locusts, ends with a promise of restoration and redemption.

BIBLE PROJECT VIDEO ON JOEL

For Next Week: Amos

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