



The Book Of Joel

Joel Tells of *God's Judgment*

For Disobedience

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Joel

OVERVIEW: A single bomb devastates a city, and the world is ushered into the nuclear age. A split atom. . . power and force such as we have never seen.

At a launch site, rockets roar and a payload is thrust into space. Discoveries dreamed of for centuries are ours as we begin to explore the edge of the universe.

Volcanos, earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, and tornados unleash uncontrollable and unstoppable force. And we can only avoid them and then pick up the pieces.

Power, strength, might—we stand in awe at the natural and man-made display. But these forces cannot touch the power of omnipotent God. Creator of galaxies, atoms, and natural laws, the sovereign Lord rules all there is and ever will be. How silly to live without him; how foolish to run and hide from him; how ridiculous to disobey him. But we do. Since Eden, we have sought independence from his control, as though we were gods and could control our destiny. And he has allowed our rebellion. But soon *the day of the Lord* will come.

It is about this day that the prophet Joel speaks, and it is the theme of his book. On this day God will judge all unrighteousness and disobedience—all accounts will be settled and the crooked made straight.

We know very little about Joel—only that he was a prophet and the son of Pethuel. He may have lived in Jerusalem because his audience was Judah, the southern kingdom. Whoever he was, Joel speaks forthrightly and forcefully in this short and powerful book. His message is one of foreboding and warning, but it is also filled with hope. Joel states that our Creator, the omnipotent Judge, is also merciful, and he wants to bless all those who trust him.

Joel begins by describing a terrible plague of locusts that covers the land and devours the crops. The devastation wrought by these creatures is but a foretaste of the coming judgment of God, the “day of the LORD.” Joel, therefore, urges the people to turn from their sin and turn back to God. Woven into this message of judgment and the need for repentance is an affirmation of God’s kindness and the blessings he promises for all who follow him. In fact, “everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved” (Joel 2:32).

As you read Joel, catch his vision of the power and might of God and of God's ultimate judgment of sin. Choose to follow, obey, and worship God alone as your sovereign Lord.

THE BLUEPRINT

The locust plague was only a foretaste of the judgment to come in the day of the Lord. This is a timeless call to repentance with the promise of blessing. Just as the people faced the tragedy of their crops being destroyed, we too will face tragic judgment if we live in sin. But God's grace is available to us both now and in that coming day.

1. The day of the locusts (Joel 1:1-2:27)

The Lord gave this message to Joel son of Pethuel.

[2] Hear this, you leaders of the people! Everyone listen! In all your history, has anything like this ever happened before? [3] Tell your children about it in the years to come. Pass the awful story down from generation to generation. [4] After the cutting locusts finished eating the crops, the swarming locusts took what was left! After them came the hopping locusts, and then the stripping locusts, too!

[5] Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! All the grapes are ruined, and all your new wine is gone! [6] A vast army of locusts has invaded my land. It is a terrible army, too numerous to count! Its teeth are as sharp as the teeth of lions! [7] They have destroyed my grapevines and fig trees, stripping their bark and leaving the branches white and bare.

[8] Weep with sorrow, as a virgin weeps when her fiancé has died. [9] There is no grain or wine to offer at the Temple of the Lord. The priests are mourning because there are no offerings. Listen to the weeping of these ministers of the Lord! [10] The fields are ruined and empty of crops. The grain, the wine, and the olive oil are gone.

[11] Despair, all you farmers! Wail, all you vine growers! Weep, because the wheat and barley—yes, all the field crops—are ruined. [12] The grapevines and the fig trees have all withered. The pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apple trees—yes, all the fruit trees—have dried up. All joy has dried up with them.

[13] Dress yourselves in sackcloth, you priests! Wail, you who serve before the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God! There is no grain or wine to offer at the Temple of your God. [14] Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people into the Temple of the Lord your God, and cry out to him there. [15] The day of the Lord is on the way, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!

[16] We watch as our food disappears before our very eyes. There are no joyful celebrations in the house of our God. [17] The seeds die in the parched ground, and the grain crops fail. The barns and granaries stand empty and abandoned. [18] How the animals moan with hunger! The cattle wander about confused because there is no pasture for them. The sheep bleat in misery.

[19] Lord, help us! The fire has consumed the pastures and burned up all the trees. [20] Even the wild animals cry out to you because they have no water to drink. The streams have dried up, and fire has consumed the pastures.

[2:1] Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem! Sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is upon us. [2] It is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick clouds and deep blackness. Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains, a mighty army appears! How great and powerful they are! The likes of them have not been seen before and never will be seen again.

[3] Fire burns in front of them and follows them in every direction! Ahead of them the land lies as fair as the Garden of Eden in all its beauty. Behind them is nothing but desolation; not one thing escapes. [4] They look like tiny horses, and they run as fast. [5] Look at them as they leap along the mountaintops! Listen to the noise they make—like the rumbling of chariots, like the roar of a fire sweeping across a field, or like a mighty army moving into battle.

[6] Fear grips all the people; every face grows pale with fright. [7] The attackers march like warriors and scale city walls like trained soldiers. Straight forward they march, never breaking rank. [8] They never jostle each other; each moves in exactly the right place. They lunge through the gaps, and no weapon can stop them. [9] They swarm over the city and run along its walls. They enter all the houses, climbing like thieves through the windows.

[10] The earth quakes as they advance, and the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine. [11] The Lord leads them with a shout! This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders. The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can endure it?

[12] That is why the Lord says, "Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. [13] Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you. [14] Who knows? Perhaps even yet he will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this terrible curse. Perhaps he will give you so much that you will be able to offer grain and wine to the Lord your God as before!

[15] Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem! Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. [16] Bring everyone—the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room. [17] The priests, who minister in the Lord's presence, will stand between the people and the altar, weeping. Let them pray, "Spare your people, Lord! They belong to you, so don't let them become an object of mockery. Don't let their name become a proverb of unbelieving foreigners who say, 'Where is the God of Israel? He must be helpless!' "

[18] Then the Lord will pity his people and be indignant for the honor of his land! [19] He will reply, "Look! I am sending you grain and wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy your needs. You will no longer be an object of mockery among the surrounding nations. [20] I will remove these armies from the north and send them far away. I will drive them back into the parched wastelands, where they will die. Those in the rear will go into the Dead Sea; those at the front will go into the Mediterranean. The stench of their rotting bodies will rise over the land."

Surely the Lord has done great things! [21] Don't be afraid, my people! Be glad now and rejoice because the Lord has done great things. [22] Don't be afraid, you animals of the field! The pastures will soon be green. The trees will again be filled with luscious fruit; fig trees and grapevines will flourish once more. [23] Rejoice, you people of Jerusalem! Rejoice in the Lord your God! For the rains he sends are an expression of his grace. Once more the autumn rains will come, as well as the rains of spring. [24] The threshing floors will again be piled high with grain, and the presses will overflow with wine and olive oil.

[25] The Lord says, "I will give you back what you lost to the stripping locusts, the cutting locusts, the swarming locusts, and the hopping locusts. It was I who sent this great destroying army against you. [26] Once again you will have all the food you want, and you will praise the Lord your God, who does these miracles for you. Never again will my people be disgraced like this.

The Day of the Lord (Joel 2:27-3:21)

[27] Then you will know that I am here among my people of Israel and that I alone am the Lord your God. My people will never again be disgraced like this. Dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. [29] In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.

[30] "I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and pillars of smoke. [31] The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. [32] And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the Lord has said. These will be among the survivors whom the Lord has called.

[3:1] "At that time, when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem," says the Lord, [2] "I will gather the armies of the world into the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will judge them for harming my people, for scattering my inheritance among the nations, and for dividing up my land. [3] They cast lots to decide which of my people would be their slaves. They traded young boys for prostitutes and little girls for enough wine to get drunk.

[4] "What do you have against me, Tyre and Sidon and you cities of Philistia? Are you trying to take revenge on me? If you are, then watch out! I will strike swiftly and pay you back for everything you have done. [5] You have taken my silver and gold and all my precious treasures, and you have carried them off to your pagan temples. [6] You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, who took them far from their homeland. [7] But I will bring them back again from all these places to which you sold them, and I will pay you back for all you have done. [8] I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the peoples of Arabia, a nation far away. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[9] Say to the nations far and wide: "Get ready for war! Call out your best warriors! Let all your fighting men advance for the attack! [10] Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Train even your weaklings to be warriors. [11] Come quickly, all you nations everywhere! Gather together in the valley."

And now, O Lord, call out your warriors!

[12] "Let the nations be called to arms. Let them march to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I, the Lord, will sit to pronounce judgment on them all. [13] Now let the sickle do its work, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread the winepress because it is full. The storage vats are overflowing with the wickedness of these people."

[14] Thousands upon thousands are waiting in the valley of decision. It is there that the day of the Lord will soon arrive. [15] The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will no longer shine. [16] The Lord's voice will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem, and the earth and heavens will begin to shake. But to his people of Israel, the Lord will be a welcoming refuge and a strong fortress.

[17] "Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, live in Zion, my holy mountain. Jerusalem will be holy forever, and foreign armies will never conquer her again. [18] In that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk. Water will fill the dry streambeds of Judah, and a fountain will burst forth from the Lord's Temple, watering the arid valley of acacias. [19] Egypt will become a wasteland and Edom a wilderness, because they attacked Judah and killed her innocent people.

[20] "But Judah will remain forever, and Jerusalem will endure through all future generations. [21] I will pardon my people's crimes, which I have not yet pardoned; and I, the Lord, will make my home in Jerusalem with my people."

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Punishment

EXPLANATION:

Like a destroying army of locusts, God's punishment for sin is overwhelming, dreadful, and unavoidable. When it comes, there will be no food, no water, no protection, and no escape. The day for settling accounts with God for how we have lived is fast approaching.

IMPORTANCE:

God is the one with whom we all must reckon—not nature, the economy, or a foreign invader. We can't ignore or offend God forever. We must pay attention to his message now, or we will face his anger later.

THEME: Forgiveness

EXPLANATION:

God stood ready to forgive and restore all those who would come to him and turn away from sin. God wanted to shower his people with his love and restore them to a proper relationship with him.

IMPORTANCE:

Forgiveness comes by turning from sin and turning toward God. It is not too late to receive God's forgiveness. God's greatest desire is for you to come to him.

THEME: Promise of the Holy Spirit

EXPLANATION: Joel predicts the time when God will pour out his Holy Spirit on all people. It will be the beginning of new and fresh worship of God by those who believe in him, but also the beginning of judgment on all who reject him.

IMPORTANCE: God is in control. Justice and restoration are in his hands. The Holy Spirit confirms God's love for us just as he did for the first Christians (Acts 2). We must be faithful to God and place our lives under the guidance and power of his Holy Spirit.

TIMELINE

King Ahab dies in battle 853 B.C.

Elisha becomes a prophet 848

Jehu becomes king of Israel; Athaliah seizes Judah's throne 841

Joel becomes a prophet? Joash becomes king of Judah 835

Jehoahaz becomes king of Israel 814

Jehoash becomes king of Israel 798

Joel's ministry ends 796?

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print