

JOEL

Author: Joel

Date: unknown

Disaster struck the southern kingdom of Judah in the form of a cloud of locusts. In a matter of hours, the fields were stripped bare. Joel seizes this occasion to proclaim God's message. Although the locust plague has been a terrible judgment for sin, God's future judgments during the day of the Lord will make that plague look pale in comparison. This book warns of approaching judgment, calls the people to repentance, and gives God's people hope of the coming day of salvation that will follow repentance.

The name Joel (Yo'el) means "Yahweh is God," a name appropriate to a book which emphasizes God's sovereign work in history. The courses of nature and nations are in His hands. God often uses nature to get the attention of people.

The book of Joel is often considered the most polished literary work among the prophetic writings. His careful and well-developed imagery, especially in describing the locust plague, along with the clear structure of the book support this claim.

Many date this book at approximately 835 B.C. during the reign of King Joash. Others think it was written during the post-exilic time period. Regardless, the message is timeless.

Theme: This brief book develops the crucial theme of the coming day of the Lord – a time of awesome judgment upon people and nations that have rebelled against God. But it is also a time of future blessing upon those who have trusted in Him. The theme of disaster runs throughout the book (locusts, plagues, famine, raging fires, invading armies, celestial phenomena), but promises of hope are woven in with the pronouncements of coming judgment.

Key verses: *"Now, therefore, says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your hearts, not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (2:12-13). "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (2:32a).*

Outline

- I. The Day of the Lord in Retrospect (Chapter 1)
 - A. The Past Day of the Locust (1:1-12)
 - B. The Past Day of the Drought (1:13-20)
- II. The Day of the Lord in Prospect (Chapters 2 – 3)
 - A. The Imminent Day of the Lord (2:1-27)
 - B. The Ultimate Day of the Lord (2:28 – 3:21)

Application: Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Those who turn to God will enjoy the blessings mentioned in Joel's prophecy; those who don't face destruction.