

God's Chastisement



Joel 1

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Joel's writings and prophecies were written prior to the Babylonian captivity (8th Century BC).

- Probably during the time of Jehoash though no king is mentioned.
- The book of Joel can be divided in three parts: (1) The Present Chastisement, 1:1-2:27; (2) The Promise of the Spirit, 2:28-28; (3) The Future Deliverances in the Coming Day of the Lord, 2:30-3:21.

The Land Laid Waste Joel 1:1-12

The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

² *Hear this, you elders,*

And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land!

Has anything like this happened in your days,

Or even in the days of your fathers?

³ *Tell your children about it,*

Let your children tell their children,

And their children another generation.

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.

⁵ *Awake, you drunkards, and weep;*

And wail, all you drinkers of wine,

Because of the new wine,

For it has been cut off from your mouth.

⁶ *For a nation has come up against My land,*

Strong, and without number;

His teeth are the teeth of a lion,

And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.

⁷ *He has laid waste My vine,*

And ruined My fig tree;

He has stripped it bare and thrown it away;

Its branches are made white.

⁸ *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth*

For the husband of her youth.

⁹ *The grain offering and the drink offering*

Have been cut off from the house of the Lord;

The priests mourn, who minister to the Lord.

¹⁰ *The field is wasted,*

The land mourns;

For the grain is ruined,

The new wine is dried up,

The oil fails.

¹¹ *Be ashamed, you farmers,*

Wail, you vinedressers,

For the wheat and the barley;

Because the harvest of the field has perished.

¹² *The vine has dried up,*

And the fig tree has withered;

The pomegranate tree,

The palm tree also,

And the apple tree—

All the trees of the field are withered;

Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men.

What was so devastating about the plague of locusts Joel described?

Judah was an agrarian society dependent on growing things. Any conditions impacting agriculture directly affected their economy.

Why did God allow the locust plague?

To get the attention of Judah to shake up their complacency before a more severe shaking comes (the Babylonian invasion).

What kind of clues do we have about the prosperity of Judah prior to the locusts?

- Things must have been going good since the locust plague was such a shock, *Has anything like this happened in your days* (v2)
- All the critical commodities are mentioned: wine, grapes, figs, grain, oil, wheat, barley, pomegranate, palm, apple... cattle, sheep (v18)

What is the danger with prosperity?

It is too easy to forget the God who brings the blessings... the prosperity gospel that equates how well you're doing with your relationship with God was a problem even back then. Israel was warned about this:

Deuteronomy 6:10-12 – *When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to*

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

v2 – How bad was the plague of locusts?

Worse than any the people living had ever seen or heard about. This makes it a significant event building up to Joel's discussing the Day of the Lord and brings to mind:

Jeremiah 30:7 – Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

Indeed, Jesus Himself spoke of this:

Matthew 24:21-22 – For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Joel is saying: "Look, this locust plague is unique – there has never been anything like it -- but this is but a foreshadowing of a more severe judgment from God called the "DAY OF THE LORD!"

How is a plague of locusts an apt illustration for the Day of the Lord?

- As the locusts bring devastation and suffering, so will the Day of the Lord.
- A biblical plague of locusts also characterizes the Tribulation – The 5th trumpet is a plague of demonic locusts from the bottomless pit that torment all people but the 144,000 for 5 months.

Given this characteristic of locusts...

Proverbs 30:27 – The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks

Why do the godless love anarchy?

- They have a rebellious spirit and hate being under authority.
- They are not rational... anarchy invariably leads to totalitarianism
- They don't understand freedom... that the constraints of God are for our own good and allow for plenty of freedom
- Slaves to sin can not avoid being slaves to authority, it is inevitable.

v4 – What significance might there be in the four different terms Joel uses to describe the locusts?

chewing, swarming, crawling, consuming

It points to the creation of God...

- The fourth day the material creation was finished (Genesis 1:14-19)
- The earth has four directions: North, South, East, West
The Creator devastated His creation to get the attention of His people.

How does the number four relate to the beginning of the Day of the Lord?

The Tribulation also opens with devastation in the signs of the four horses of the apocalypse...

- White horse – with a leader with a crown (Antichrist)
- Red horse – war (power to take peace from earth)
- Black horse – famine (day's wage for a meal)
- Pale Green horse – death (1/4th of world dies)

v5 – What sin does Joel highlight here?

The sin defined here is drunkenness! It is interesting that Joel does not mention the sin of idolatry (turning from God) which we know from the other prophets was a problem in both Israel and Judah, only drunkenness.

So, why didn't Joel highlight the sin of idolatry?

It is likely Joel equated idolatry with drunkenness seeing it a root problem leading to idolatry...

- Seeking alternate realities is what idolatry does
- Drugs are often part of idolatrous religions
- Using a substance to lose control is a lot like seeking after other gods as a distraction from the true God
- Indeed, it is mentioned along with idolatry among the sins of the tribulation...

Revelation 9:20-21 – But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

v6-7 – Why did Joel here liken the plague of locusts to an invading nation?

It was but a prelude to a worse invasion of the Babylonian army that was to come. Both were from God intended to wake up Judah from complacency and turning away from God.

- As the locusts devastated their food supply, so would the Babylonian army making them totally dependent on their invaders.

Whose land is referred to in Joel 1:6?

My land – Joel is speaking God's words referring to Judah as God's land.

- God speaks of “my land” with deep affection claiming it as His own heritage

Why would God devastate a land He is claiming as His own?

For the sake of His people, the Jews...

- Although the country may be sacred to God, it is not exempt from His chastisement
- Even God’s children cannot sin with impunity

What is the principle here that is important for us to realize?

So long as God is holy and righteous, sinners have no immunity from punishment

- As Christians we are saved from the worst consequence of sin, spiritual death, but we are not exempt from all other consequences of sin

V7 – What is the significance of the devastation to the vine and fig tree? Why are these two called out?

It was not only the agriculture that is laid waste, but the people themselves

- In a spiritual sense, the Hebrew people are God’s vine, His vineyard; the fig tree is often used as a symbol of Israel

Isaiah 5:5-7 – *“Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its walls, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” “The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight.”*

- God planted His people Israel in sovereign grace and nurtured them in abiding love, yet Israel has failed to bring forth good fruit.

v8-9 – What does Joel say the people should do in light of this chastisement from God?

- The people are to “mourn.” Like a young bride who has lost her husband, perhaps killed in battle, that is the way the nation should weep!
- The priests, the LORD’s ministers, are to “mourn.” They are not able to make grain and drink offerings to the LORD at all!

V10-12 – Details of the loss of their food supply is described. What is the result of all this devastation?

“Surely the joy of mankind is withered away.”

It is not just happiness which is tied to favorable circumstances that is gone... it is joy because the

devastation is from God. This speaks to their spiritual state...

Why is having joy so important?

It is one of the fruits of the Spirit...

Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

When we have an active relationship with our Savior, we can have joy even in the midst of unhappy circumstances.

What is the application of this for today? What is the joy in the unhappy trends of this world?

It isn’t in the unhappy trends of the world; it is in Christ who is allowing these trends to run their course for a season. God is using them to prepare the world for His Millennial Kingdom. Our joy is in seeing God’s plan come to fruition and in his promises to come for and resurrect us.

Mourning for the Land

¹³ *Gird yourselves and lament, you priests;*

Wail, you who minister before the altar;

Come, lie all night in sackcloth,

You who minister to my God;

For the grain offering and the drink offering

Are withheld from the house of your God.

¹⁴ *Consecrate a fast,*

Call a sacred assembly;

Gather the elders

And all the inhabitants of the land

Into the house of the Lord your God,

And cry out to the Lord.

¹⁵ *Alas for the day!*

For the day of the Lord is at hand;

It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

¹⁶ *Is not the food cut off before our eyes,*

Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

¹⁷ *The seed shrivels under the clods,*

Storehouses are in shambles;

Barns are broken down,

For the grain has withered.

¹⁸ *How the animals groan!*

The herds of cattle are restless,

Because they have no pasture;

Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

¹⁹ *O Lord, to You I cry out;*

For fire has devoured the open pastures,

And a flame has burned all the trees of the field.

²⁰ *The beasts of the field also cry out to You,*

For the water brooks are dried up,

And fire has devoured the open pastures.

v13-14 – What counsel does Joe give the religious leaders?

- They should be in “mourning and penitence” because there was nothing for them to use for the offerings so they could not perform their function.
- They should lead the people in fasting, meeting together, and prayer... God wants to see their repentance!

Why does God want us to repent?

He wants to forgive us – He is merciful and gracious!

v15 – Why do you think Joel brings up the Day of the Lord at this point?

Their current chastisement from God is but a foreshadowing of a greater time of destruction that is coming but what God is seeking is the same... repentance!

What is the day of the Lord?

The phrase “day of the Lord” refers to a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history.

- a period of time when Christ prepares the world for His reign and when He reigns throughout the world
- The Rapture, Tribulation and Millennial Kingdom

How could Joel say that the Day of the Lord was at hand... he wrote that centuries before Christ?

- Personally, the Day of the Lord has always been close to everyone because it effectively arrives the day you die.
- Prophetically and in context, he was speaking to Israel in the time of Jacob’s trouble and thus referring to it happening suddenly and without warning.

Is there a distinction between the Day of the Lord and the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ?

1 Cor. 1:7- 8 – *Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is the day when Jesus will come back to take His church out of the world (Rapture), and then the church will come before the judgment seat of Christ (the Bema) in heaven to determine individual rewards.

- The rapture is part of God pouring out His wrath on the earth...
Psalm 12:1 – Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

v16-20 – Why is joy and gladness gone from the house of our God?

The house of our God was the Temple

- The joy and gladness are gone because when the crops are destroyed, neither firstfruits nor thank-offerings can be brought to the sanctuary
- The crisis was both “natural” and “spiritual”

v18 – How else did God’s chastisement of Judah impact His creation?

Not only were people affected by the consequences of mankind’s sin but also the animals. This brings to mind Paul’s statement about the general suffering of God’s creation:

Romans 8:19-21 – For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The curse impacting animals will be removed during the Millennial Kingdom that begins when Christ returns with the church to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

v19-20 – What calamity does Joel speak of here?

Apparently along with a plague of locusts, there was also a drought and wild fires. If there was any doubt God was behind their chastisement, this was re-enforced by a trifecta of calamities: locusts, drought, wildfire. If you think disasters seem to come in threes, there is a reason: three points to God.

When it appears that there is no way out of our problems, what can we do?

There is only one way left:

- Seek God for forgiveness and mercy
- Realize that from Him alone can come the deliverance from our affliction

Did Judah listen to God? Did the priest and the people seek the Lord?

Yes, they did for a season... Joel 2:18-19 shows the LORD accepting the repentance of the people and promising that He will not only remove from them the plague of locusts (2:20), but that He will also restore to them all that the locusts have eaten (2:23-25).

So, what applications can we see in this message from the Prophet Joel?

- “The Day of the LORD” is at hand! – always be ready
- Don’t let things get to a point where we need chastisement from God... turn to Him today!