

# The Minor Prophets - Joel

- Introduction
  - The Hebrew word for Joel is **יְוֵאל** (yo-el) which means “YHWH is God”.
  - There are at least 14 men with the name Joel in the Old Testament.
  - He is called the son of Pethuel [1:1] (who is mentioned only here), but little else is known about this man who is chosen by the Lord to deliver an important prophetic message to the people of Israel.
  - Unlike most prophetic books, no information is given in the opening verse that establishes the time frame for this prophetic ministry.
  - There are arguments for various dates of writing for this book, but the best evidence points to the early reign of Jehoash (Joash) as king of Judah [2 Kgs 11:21ff].
  - The prophets Amos and Ezekiel both quoted Joel in their writings [Joel 3:16 – Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 – Amos 9:13].
- Observations from the Text
  - The elders and all inhabitants are told to hear (**שמעו**, shaw-mah) and listen (**אזנו**, aw-zan) [1:2].
    - These terms are used here in a parallel Hebrew construction which means that both terms apply to both groups.
    - Other verses with these two terms used in parallel: Gen 4:23; Ex 15:26; Num 23:18; Deut 1:45; 32:1; Jdgs 5:3; Job 33:1; 34:2, 16; Ps 17:1; 39:12; 49:1; 54:2; 84:8; 143:1; Isa 1:2, 10; 28:23; 32:9; 42:23; 64:4; Jer 13:15; Hos 5:1.
  - Joel challenges the people of Israel to share their spiritual wisdom with the generations to come [1:2b-3; Ex 10:2; Deut 4:9; Ps 78:1-8].
  - Four waves of locust attacks had completely destroyed the land [1:4].
    - Gnawing, swarming, creeping, and stripping are all terms describing locusts (see also 2:25).
    - Some have suggested these are the four stages of locust development.
  - The devastation will result in widespread mourning [1:5-12].
    - The drunkards will weep because they have lost their sweet wine to drink [1:5-7].
    - The whole land will mourn because the loss of crops leaves them without the ingredients needed for the daily offerings [1:8-10].
    - Farmers and vine growers will wail and be ashamed because the fruit of their labor has been destroyed [1:11-12].
  - The priests are instructed to lead by example with a humble response [1:13].
    - Priests normally gird themselves with a sash, but this circumstance calls for sackcloth [cp. 2 Kings 19:2].

- Priests normally praise (הָלַל, hal-al) God, but here are called to lament (יָלַל, yal-al) [Ecc 3:4; Isa 32:12; Jer 4:8; Mic 1:8; Zech 12:10].
- The priests are then instructed to call everyone together and consecrate a fast [1:14].
  - The concept of a consecrated fast is presented in both the O.T. [2 Sam 12:16-20; Dan 9:3-19] and the N.T. [Acts 13:2-3; 14:23].
  - The assembly of the people and the fast was to be accompanied by humble repentance of the people expressed by crying out to the Lord [cf. 1 Sam 7:6; Neh 9:1-2; Jonah 3:5-8].
- The destruction of the locusts served as a type of the destruction coming in the Day of the Lord [1:15].
- The effects of the recent devastating locust attack are described in more detail [1:16-18].
- Joel cries out to the Lord and compares the utter destruction wrought by the locusts to that of a fire which consumes everything in its path [1:19-20].
- Joel then begins an amazing passage describing the coming Day of the Lord [2:1-2].
  - The Day of the Lord is part of God's A to Ω plan and its coming is assured [2:1].
  - The coming Day of the Lord is unique in all of human history [2:2 cf. Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21-22].
- The Tribulational army is described as a consuming fire as the locusts had been [2:3].
- This relentless army that will come up against Israel is described [2:4-11].
  - Military language is used throughout this vivid description of the army.
  - The rush of this army invokes great fear [2:6, 9].
  - They are a very disciplined army [2:7-8].
  - Cosmic signs of the Day of the Lord will coincide with this army's advances [2:10].
  - The sovereign Lord controls this army [2:11].
- The Lord's purpose is to bring the people to repentance – the rending of their hearts – as He reminds them of His character [2:12-14].
  - The Lord is חַנּוּן (chan-noon = gracious).
  - The Lord is רַחוּם (rach-oom = compassionate).
  - The Lord is אָרֶךְ + אַף (aw-rake + aph = slow to anger, longsuffering).
  - The Lord abounds in חֶסֶד (cheh-sed = loving-kindness, grace, mercy, etc.).
- Another trumpet is to be sounded calling for national repentance [2:15-17].
- Joel reminds Israel that, once the Lord's wrath in the Day of the Lord results in repentance, He will deliver His people [2:18-27].
  - The opposing army will be destroyed [2:20].
  - The land will be restored [2:19, 22-24, 26].
  - Their reproach will be taken away, never to return [2:19, 27].
- After all of these things have come to pass, God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind [2:28-29].
  - The “after this” in verse 28 is a critical marker in the text, making it clear that this does not occur during the dispensation of the Church.

- Other prophets tell of this pouring out of the Spirit [Zech 12:10; Ezek 39:29], but only Joel makes it clear that this applies to all mankind.
- Spirit-indwelled Jewish believers will once again prophesy.
- Peter cited this passage, but did not imply that this prophecy was fulfilled [Acts 2:15-21].
  - Joel's outpouring is universal, not localized.
  - Tongues is not even mentioned in Joel.
- Joel reiterates the order of eschatological events that will take place [2:30-32].
  - The Lord will display signs and wonders.
  - The great and awesome Day of the Lord occurs.
  - Those who repent and call upon the name of the Lord will escape (be rescued).
  - The Lord will call (to prophesy) people from among the survivors (the Jews).
- A description of future judgment of the nations is given [3:1-8].
  - Judah and Jerusalem are restored [3:1].
  - The nations are gathered to the valley of Jehoshaphat (YHWH judges) [3:2].
  - Their judgment is recompense for what they have done to the Jewish people [3:3-7].
  - Near term recompense foreshadows what will occur in the Day of the Lord [3:8].
- Joel pronounces a mocking call for the nations to try to stop this judgment [3:9-17].
  - The opposite of the Millennial disarmament is called for [3:10].
  - The Lord will achieve victory over the "mighty men" and protect His people [3:9, 11, 16].
  - This message mocks the nations that falsely claim they want peace with Israel [Jer 6:14; 8:11; Ezek 13:10, 16].
- The Lord Himself will restore Israel to ideal environmental conditions [3:18].
- The land of Israel's enemies will be made desolate [3:19].
- This restoration of Israel is permanent [3:20].
- The Lord achieves vengeance upon Israel's enemies as He takes His place in Jerusalem to rule in the Millennium [3:21].
- Applications for Today
  - Many times things we view as "natural disasters" are actually divine discipline upon a wicked people [Ps 104:4; Isa 29:6].
  - During times of national testing spiritual leaders should lead the people to repentance and prayer [2 Chr 20:3-4; Jer 36:9-10].
  - All of Israel's enemies who put up strong opposition to the Jews today are slated for the coming Day of the Lord judgment.
  - Before the Holy Spirit can be poured out on all mankind, the Church must first depart.
  - All of the global "peace" movements are in vain because peace will never be achieved until Christ brings it about through military victory at Armageddon [Mt 24:6; 1 Thess 5:3].