

# JOEL

“Perhaps one of the most important Biblical books for our day, and yet one of the shortest of the Minor Prophets, is the book of Joel. With the emphasis on charismatic renewal on the one hand and eschatological expectation on the other, this work stands out as markedly significant.”<sup>1</sup>

## THE BIG PICTURE – JOEL – “YAHWEH IS GOD”

- Christ – “Christ is presented as the one who gives the Holy Spirit (2:28), who judges the nations (3:2, 12), and who is the Refuge and Stronghold for His people (3:16).”<sup>2</sup>

“Christ can be seen in His relation to the coming messianic blessing. It is possible, indeed probable, that 2:23 should be translated, “for he has given you a teacher for righteousness.” If so, this is a reference to Messiah. The context clearly calls for Messiah's presence (2:26-27 and 2:32-3:2).”<sup>3</sup>

- The New Testament Witness – “It is not uncommon for a prophet to have both a near view (the immediate historical situation) and a far view (future application) in his message.”<sup>4</sup>
  - Joel 2:28-32 w/ Acts 2:17-21
  - Joel 2:32 w/ Romans 10:13

Joel speaks of **New Covenant Blessing** in 2:28ff. This was fulfilled in Acts 2. More of the same will be manifested in later expressions of the kingdom’s ultimate installment, but we must see what happened in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, and continues to this day, as part of what Joel spoke. We, this local church, are living in the fulfillment of the promise made to the nation through Joel in chapter 2 and which found expression on the Day of Pentecost.

The table below represents some of the more explicit quotes and allusions between specific passages in Joel and passages from the Old and New Testaments.

## WHAT TIME IS IT?

Joel's Ministry @835 - 796BC

850 Homer writes *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – 800 beginning of period of composition of the Upanishads – 776 first Olympic games in Greece - Kings of Israel: Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash – Kings of Judah: Joash – Prophets who were contemporary with Joel: Elisha

Joel	Old Testament	New Testament
1:6 & 2:2-10		Revelation 9:3, 7-9
1:15	Isaiah 13:6; Ezekiel 30:2-3	
2:1	Zephaniah 1:14-16	
2:1-2	Amos 5:18, 20	
2:11	Malachi 3:2	
2:27	Isaiah 45:5; Ezekiel 36:11	
2:28-32		Acts 2:16-21
2:31	Malachi 4:5	
2:32	Obadiah 17*	Romans 10:13
3:10	Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3	
3:16	Amos 1:2	
3:17	Obadiah 17	
3:18	Amos 9:13	

\*If Joel 2:23 quotes Obadiah 17, then it must be post-exilic and not pre-exilic since Obadiah would not be available to quote. However, the dating of Joel is problematic. However, as long as Obadiah precedes Joel, Joel can still be 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## INTRODUCTION

Joel uses **the vivid imagery of a locust plague** to communicate impending judgment upon the nation of Judah. Though the judgment itself is still hundreds of years in the future God begins the slow and faithful process of seeking to woo His people back. The locusts are harbingers of judgment. Just as the locust are thorough and unstoppable, so too shall be the judgment of God against all those who seek to thwart His will and break His Law.

### I. WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

#### A. His historical context

Israel is 113 years away from judgment (722BC), Judah, 249 years (586BC), yet God is even now working to bring them back into the fold. Joel is one of the twelve books that make up the Minor Prophets. They are minor not because of importance but because of length. Joel is one of the **pre-exilic prophets preaching to the nation of Judah**.

The prophet preached and was probably written during a forty year period of time (@835 - 796 BC). "On the basis of internal evidence, the most reasonable estimate is in the monarchy of King Joash, during the regency of Jehoida, the high priest, about 830 BC."<sup>5</sup>

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“According to the formerly generally accepted opinion, Joel wrote in the beginning of the reign of King Joash (836-797 B.C.), and was therefore the oldest prophet to leave a book of prophecies. This theory of an early date of composition was, above all, strongly supported by the fact that no mention is made of the Assyrians.”<sup>6</sup>

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Not everyone is agreed as to when Joel preached to the nation of Judah. Leon Wood in *The Prophets Of Israel* (pp. 266-268) and Freedman (pp. 147-149) concur as the time period being @835BC.

The only certainty we have in dating Joel is not having been written during the exile (-ha!).

### B. His global context

- 539 BCE . A Persian army captures Babylon and brings it into the empire of Cyrus the Great .  
Returning to Jerusalem, the Jews begin to rebuild the Temple
- 530 BCE . Cyrus the Great is buried in an austere impressive tomb at Pasagardae, in Persia . The  
Greek colonists of Paestum, in southern Italy, build the first of their three superb temples
- c. 529 BCE . The Greek mathematician Pythagoras establishes himself, along with his followers, in  
southern Italy
- 528 BCE . The Phoenician cities, liberated from Babylonian rule, willingly accept inclusion in the  
Persian empire
- 522 BCE . Darius I wins the Persian throne and ushers in the heyday of the Achaemenid empire
- 518 BCE . Darius starts to build a spectacular new palace and capital at Persepolis
- c. 515 BCE . The Persian emperor Darius I constructs a canal linking the Nile to the Red Sea
- 513 BCE . The Chinese become the first people to cast iron, after developing a furnace which can  
reach a very high temperature
- 510 BCE . Hecateus, a geographer in Miletus, produces a map showing the Greek idea of the  
known world . The Roman senate becomes an executive body with two of its members elected  
annually as consuls, or joint heads of state
- c. 500 BCE . A Persian rug, woven with a knotted pile, is placed in the tomb of a Scythian chieftain  
and survives to this day . The rulers of Aksum, the first Ethiopian kingdom, claim descent  
from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba . The 10,000 elite troops of the Persian empire, known  
as the Immortals, demonstrate the power of a professional standing army . The Greeks are  
intrigued by the iron-attracting property of a mineral which they find in the district of  
Magnesia . The secret of lacquer, the sap of a tree which can be hardened by moisture, is  
discovered in China. The great network of roads built by Darius I has at its centre the 2000-  
mile royal road from Susa to Sardis . The Isthmian games at Corinth are by now a regular  
event, as are the Pythian games and the Nemean games . The Chinese I Jing, or 'Classic of  
Changes', is compiled as a book of divination . The Greeks observe the strange effect of

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electricity, seen when amber (known to them as electron) is rubbed . Darius I adopts Zoroastrianism as the religion of the Persian empire . The Magi, possibly converting from an earlier Iranian religion, become the priests of Zoroastrianism . The new and more sophisticated fashion in Greek vases is the red-figure style . The Lapps, hunters of reindeer, have Scandinavia to themselves before the arrival of Germanic tribes . Parmenides is the first pure philosopher, using logic as a philosophical tool in his poem Nature . The Celts, moving west from central Europe, settle in France and northern Spain . The Chinese philosophy of alternating opposites is expressed as yin and yang . Nok terracotta figures, found in modern Nigeria, stand at the beginning of the rich tradition of African sculpture . The followers of Pythagoras discover the mathematical basis of the octave.

### C. His contemporaries

Joel was apparently a contemporary to Elisha and probably knew Elijah. Joash was king in Judah in the South and Jehu was king over Israel in the North. During this period you have the evil reign of Jezebel (Israel) and her evil daughter Athaliah (Judah).

Joash (2 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Chron. 24:1-27) was a boy king who was counseled by the godly High Priest Jehoiada. During his reign Judah experienced 'revival' and the nation had an external adherence to the Mosaic Code.

Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-10:36) was used by God to clean up the nation of Israel, cut off the house of Omri and curb the worship of Baal. Jehu, however, was simply an instrument in God's hand.

## II. WHO WROTE THE BOOK?

The name Joel means, "Yahweh is God." "The affirmation is probably "Yahweh is God." This is the reverse of Elijah ("God is Yahweh")"<sup>8</sup> "There is no information concerning the prophet outside the book itself (Acts 2:16 quotes the prophet Joel), and his birthplace and conditions of life are unknown. He was the son of Pethuel, who is otherwise unknown. He was doubtless from Judah and possibly a native of Jerusalem (1:9; 2:15-17, 23, 32; 3:1)."<sup>9</sup>

His authorship is plainly stated in 1:1.

1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

## III. TO WHOM WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

His immediate audience is two-fold. First, there is a national appeal that has no salvific necessity. It is to the nation of Judah he speaks. Then, there is an appeal to the believing remnant inside of the unbelieving masses that is both near (immediate) and far off (those who will be saved in future generations regardless of nationality).

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#### IV. WHAT PROBLEMS DOES THE BOOK POSE?

One of the major problems in the book concerns the description of the army in 2:2-11. Is Joel describing God's judgment in the form of another (most agree chapter one describes actual locusts) actual and literal locust plague? Or does he use locusts as a figure of a future invasion from the North?<sup>10</sup>

The second major problem in the book concerns the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 (3:1-5 in the Hebrew Bible). Peter quotes this passage (Acts 2), and the question concerns the relationship of Joel's passage to the day of Pentecost.<sup>11</sup>

#### V. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK?

"The immediate occasion for the writing of the book was the devastation of the land by a double plague of locusts and drought."<sup>12</sup>

Locusts were often sent as a judgment from God (Deut. 28:38-42; Exo. 10:12-15; 1 Kings 8:37; Rev. 9:1-12). "The theme of this prophet was a solemn warning of divine judgment to be visited upon Israel in the day of Jehovah."<sup>13</sup>

"The central theme of the book is the emphasis upon the day of the Lord."<sup>14</sup>

The book is first stern judgment, then abundant blessing. "Joel presents a remarkable eschatological interpretation of divine purpose in relation to human history..."<sup>15</sup> Preaches a message of judgment in order to stir the people toward repentance.

#### VI. AN OUTLINE FOR JOEL

A. Joel as literature

B. Joel outlined

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF JOEL	
JUDGMENT / 1:1-2:11	THE BATTLE OF ARMAGGEDON (Chapter 3)
PIVOTAL POINT / 2:12-17	
BLESSING / 2:18-32	

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- **Lament** over a great locust plague and a severe drought (1:1–2:17)
  - The effects of these events on agriculture, farmers, and on the supply of agricultural offerings for the Jerusalem temple, interspersed with a call to national lament. (1:1–20)
  - A more apocalyptic passage comparing the locusts to an army, and revealing that they are God’s army. (2:1–11)
  - *A call to national repentance* in the face of God’s judgment. (2:12–17)
- **Promise** of future blessings (2:18–32)
  - Banishment of the locusts and restoration of agricultural productivity as a divine response to national penitence. (2:18–27)
  - Future prophetic gifts to all God’s people, and the safety of God’s people in the face of cosmic cataclysm. (2:28–32)
- **Coming judgment** on God’s (Israel’s) enemies and the vindication of Israel. (3:1–21)

“Joel’s four oracles (1:2-20; 2:1-17; 2:18-3:5; 3:1-21), averaging 18 verses, are remarkably consistent in length. Joel is an apocalypticist but not strictly a visionary, somewhat in the manner of Isaiah.”<sup>16</sup>

## VII. KEY DOCTRINAL IDEAS IN JOEL

Many of the themes within Joel are directly applicable to the believing remnant within the nation of Israel. The larger theology of God’s sovereignty and of judgment and restoration can be widely applied to anyone. One should seek to handle cautiously any national promises to the USA or any other nation for that matter.

### A. The book of Joel clearly shows the sovereignty of God.

“Many times we see that God is in total control of every circumstance and creature. In chapter one, we see the total destruction of Judah from the locusts.”<sup>17</sup>

“Joel’s depiction of the absolute authority of Yahweh over all the peoples of the earth is among the strongest in the Old Testament.”<sup>18</sup>

### B. The unchanging nature of God is a major theme in Joel, as in all of Scripture.<sup>19</sup>

### C. The Day of the LORD (1:1-12; 2:1-11; 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14)

“The theme that dominates the book of Joel and binds it together is the Day of Yahweh.”<sup>20</sup>

“While many OT prophets incorporated predictions of the Day of Yahweh among their oracles, this concept is so prominent in Joel that it may be likened to an engine driving the prophecy.”<sup>21</sup>

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“Joel’s comprehensive exposition of the Day of Yahweh thus reaches a climax in the fulfillment of covenant blessing of the penitent people in the land. Within the confines of the OT revelation the prophecy of Joel reaches a high-water mark of promise. Joel is a man of his time, and Yahweh speaks through him in terms of the old covenant. His book exhibits the habitual foreshortening of OT prophecy. But the NT seizes on one of his pinnacles of hope and claims its fulfillment at Pentecost.”<sup>22</sup>

The phrase “The Day of the LORD” occurs in the following references, 1:15; 2:1, 2, 11, 31; 3:14, 18. The Day of the Lord is a period that **includes both blessing and judgment**. Israel shall be judged for her rebellion against God, but shall also stand in the pathway of blessing in fulfillment of God’s covenant promises.

Through the imagery of an historical double plague of locusts and drought the prophet paints an incredible picture of future judgment that awaits the nation of Judah.

B. A call or invitation to repent (1:13-20; 2:12-17)

Though the judgment found in the Day of the LORD is loathsome, the hand of mercy is still being extended to the nation if they but turn to Him.

“Heartfelt sorrow and a turning back to God in honest repentance is still required by God, from His people.”<sup>23</sup>

C. Resultant blessings on a repentant nation (2:18-32)

“Like all the canonical prophets, Joel depended on the Mosaic covenant of the Pentateuch for the basic points of his message: the covenant’s curses must come as a result of national disobedience; but after a period of chastisement, God will restore his people and bless them in ways they had not yet experienced.”<sup>24</sup>

The nation of Judah will experience comprehensive blessings for the LORD will be in their midst (v. 27). He will do great things (v. 21) for He is the LORD their God and none else (v. 27).

D. The battle of Armageddon (3:1-16a)

All nations (v. 2) shall be brought to the valley of Jehoshaphat (vv. 2, 14) and they shall do battle against Israel and with the LORD.

E. Future blessings again depicted (3:16b-21)

Jerusalem and her inhabitants will be holy for the LORD and will dwell there forever (vv. 17, 21).

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“NT theology builds upon a framework erected long before by Joel and his co-religionists. Joel and the follower of Jesus believe together – although their expressions and emphases may vary – in God’s coming intervention in a topsy-turvy world to settle its moral accounts, to honor right and banish wrong.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/15/15-1/15-1-pp031-038\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/15/15-1/15-1-pp031-038_JETS.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, [Prince Press, 2007], 236.

<sup>3</sup> <http://bible.org/seriespage/joel-introduction-outline-and-argument>

<sup>4</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, [Prince Press, 2007], 236.

<sup>5</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 304.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8703-joel-book-of>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=341&letter=J>

<sup>8</sup> <http://bible.org/article/introduction-book-joel>

<sup>9</sup> Hobart E. Freeman, *Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 149.

<sup>10</sup> <http://bible.org/seriespage/joel-introduction-outline-and-argument>

<sup>11</sup> <http://bible.org/seriespage/joel-introduction-outline-and-argument>

<sup>12</sup> *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 820.

<sup>13</sup> Archer, *Survey Old Testament Introduction*, 303.

<sup>14</sup> Freeman, *Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 881.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC (Waco TX: Word, 1987), 227.

<sup>17</sup> <http://procal.tripod.com/joel.html>

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC (Waco TX: Word, 1987), 229.

<sup>19</sup> <http://procal.tripod.com/joel.html>

<sup>20</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 36.

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# THE DAY OF THE LORD

<https://www.universitybaptist.us/index.php/resources/pastor-s-sunday-evening-bible-study>



