

29 – Joel: “The Day of the Lord”

- The name **Joel means "Yahweh is God."** We don't know much about him, except that he was the son of Pethuel (1:1), of whom nothing is known. Joel was one of the earliest prophets, and there is still debate about when he prophesied. Most think it was around 835 BC. Joel is quoted by Isaiah (750 BC) and other prophets.
- **Joel uses a locust swarm** which invaded Judah sometime before he wrote. This catastrophic event provided the backdrop for Joel's call to repentance. Joel used this calamity as the picture of a yet future devastation which could be avoided by true repentance. There is still controversy about whether the army described in chapter 2 is an actual army of locusts (a future judgment), or symbolic of a military invasion from the North. The debate on this continues, but there is evidence that this goes well beyond a typical literal locust invasion. Also, real locusts apparently come from the south, while these described come from the north (*always the place of Israel's enemies*). Joel may be using an actual devastating locust attack to act as a “type” for a military invasion coming later (perhaps Assyria, Babylon, or another army later, ie., Armageddon)
- Joel's main theme is to call the people to repentance in view of the impending **"Day of Yahweh,"** in which God will sovereignly call His people to repentance during a time of unique astronomical signs (2:10, 30, 31). Ultimately the book of Joel will find its fulfillment in the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, preceding the judgment of the nations (3:2) and the establishment of the millennial kingdom (3:10, 17-21).
- The locust plague was only a **forerunner of much greater judgment** in the coming day of Yahweh. This judgment would take the form of an invading army (2:1-11) and devastating signs in the heavens (2:10, 30-31) followed by divine judgment in the nations (3:2, 12-16) and blessing for Israel (3:16-21).
- Joel provides a framework for later development of the theme "day of Yahweh" (the LORD). This is the first place it is mentioned, and it is NOT a good day!



Highlights

The locust plague— calling for repentance 1:1-20	The invader from the North— calling for repentance 2:1-27	The day of Yahweh revealed (Heb text: 3:1-4:21) 2:28-3:21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ introduction 1:1 ▪ locust invasion 1:2-4 ▪ call to repentance 1:5-14 ▪ appeal to drunkards 1:5-7 ▪ appeal to people 1:8-12 ▪ appeal to priests 1:13 ▪ appeal to the elders 1:14 ▪ announcement of the day of Yahweh (“Day of the Lord”) 1:15-20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ invasion described 2:1-11 ▪ warning concerning the day of Yahweh 2:1-2 ▪ destruction of that day 2:3 ▪ description of invader 2:4-9 ▪ circumstances of invasion 2:10-11 ▪ call to repentance 2:12-17 ▪ Yahweh's answer 2:18-27 ▪ Blessing for Israel 2:18-19 ▪ removal of invaders 2:20 ▪ restoration of blessings 2:21-27 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ advent of the Spirit 2:29 ▪ signs in the heavens 2:30-31 ▪ regathering of Israel to the land 2:32 ▪ judgment and blessing 3:1-21 ▪ Judgment on the nations 3:1-16a ▪ Judgment declared 3:1-2 ▪ reason for judgment 3:3-8 ▪ proclamation of judgment 3:9-12 ▪ execution of judgment 3:13-16a ▪ Blessing on Israel 3:16b-21 ▪ Israel's protection 3:16b-17 ▪ Israel's blessings 3:18 ▪ Israel's enemies 3:19 ▪ Israel's permanence 3:20 ▪ Israel's pardon 3:21a ▪ Yahweh's presence 3:21b

- Joel opens with a statement that the **desolation of the locust plague was unforgettable** (1:1-3). The successive waves of locusts totally destroyed all vegetation (1:4). This set the stage for an appeal to the drunkards, who had no wine (1:5-7). The land did not produce (1:8-10); and drought conditions prevailed (1:11-12). The priests were urged to lead the nation (1:13) in fasting and calling the elders of the people to repentance and turning to Yahweh (1:14).
- **If Israel did not repent, there would come a day in which Yahweh will deal very severely with His people** (1:15- 20). There would be no food; joy and gladness would depart; crops would not grow; granaries would be unused; the livestock would suffer from lack of pasture; range fires would devastate; and there would be no water in the empty stream beds.
- The past **locust plague provided the background for the future invader** (2:1-11) from the North (2:20). This desolation has a double reference, not only to a future Assyrian or Babylonian invasion, but most especially to the climactic invasion during the campaign of Armageddon in the distant future. This day of Yahweh will be one of darkness, gloom and cloudy blackness (2:2). The earth will shake. The sun and moon will be darkened and the stars no longer shine (2:10). Yahweh is sovereign and will use this army to accomplish His purpose (2:11).
- Joel continues up to his main point: **now is the time for repentance** (2:12- 17). In that great day when God intervenes for His people, He will send prosperity to Israel, and no longer will Israel be an object of scorn to the nations (2:18-19). This invading army from the North will be driven out, part into the Dead Sea and part into the Mediterranean Sea, resulting in their total destruction (2:20).
- **Yahweh will again do great things for His people** (2:20b). Rain will once again fall on the land; a Teacher of Righteousness (the Messiah) will accompany the prosperity. Israel will live in prosperity and never again be shamed (2:27).
- *“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.* (2:28-29) This has a double reference. First, it applied to the day of Pentecost, which was completely fulfilled in Acts 2. Second, it refers to the time at the last days when the Spirit will be poured out on the entire believing remnant (could be both Jews and Gentiles) most likely in the Tribulation. It is this remnant who will see the accompanying signs in the heavens (2:30-31) during those climactic days before the return of Messiah. At that time everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (2:32). Israel will be restored in that great day, and all nations will be summoned for judgment (3:1-2; cf. Matt. 25:31-46). Meanwhile, Israel's enemies will be called to account for their treatment of Israel in Joel's day (3:4-8).
- *Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” Assemble and come, all you nations, And gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great.” Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.* (Joel 3:10-14)
Judgment is proclaimed among the nations. They should beat the implements of agriculture into weapons of warfare and assemble in the valley of Jehoshaphat to **stand accountable for their treatment of Israel and for their wickedness before God** (3:9-13; cf. Rev. 19). They will be judged (3:14-16a) but Israel will be secure (3:16b). This is a direct reference to Armageddon (Rev. 14, 16, 19). (See also Isaiah 63:1-6)
- **Jerusalem will be holy** (3:17), and **prosperity will once again flow into the barren land of Israel** (3:18; Ezek. 47). Israel's enemies will be punished (3:19), but Judah will be inhabited forever, a forgiven people (3:20-21). In that day the shout of worship will resound through the whole earth, "Yahweh dwells in Zion!" Joel, as most of the prophets, announces a day of doom and judgment, but also a day of restoration and joy.

