

29 - Joel

Joel

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO JOEL

The Prophet Joel is mentioned by name only here and in the book of Acts. His name means "The Lord is God." It is probable that he lived in Judah, since he mentions Judah and Jerusalem in his book. He is possibly writing after the people returned from Babylonian captivity, since there is no mention of a king, and life seems to be centered around the temple. He writes against the background of a devastating plague of locusts, followed by a drought. He sees this as God's warning to his people to repent and restore their relationship with God. The materialistic, self-indulgent lifestyle of the people displeased God. God blessed the land, but, instead of seeking God, the people became pleasure-seeking. The locust plague is a warning of the coming Day of the Lord. The prophet promises that God's people will be restored after repentance, and those who harassed and persecuted them will be judged on the Day of the Lord.

Peter quotes Joel in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, and points out that Joel prophesied about the coming of the Holy Spirit on all flesh.

The book may be divided into 2 parts:

I. The locust plague--God's warning (1:1-2:17)

II. The Day of the Lord--God's judgment

on the nations (2:18-3:21)

THE JOY OF MANKIND IS WITHERED AWAY

Joel 1:1-20 (Thur.) August 23

Key Verse: 1:19a

1. The joy of mankind is withered (1-12)

In Joel's time there was an invasion of locusts such as had never been before in Judah. It was like the invasion of a foreign army (6,7). The locusts stripped the bark from the trees; they laid waste the vines and devoured the grain in the fields. A drought followed the locust. Drunkards mourned because there was no wine; priests, because there was no grain for offerings. Farmers despaired. The joy of mankind had withered away. Natural disaster reminds us that God's blessings should not be taken for granted.

2. A call to repentance (13-20)

The day of the Lord is a time of God's decisive intervention in human history. God's acts of judgment are to call people to repent. The invasion of locusts was not an accident. It was the Lord's invitation to repent and call on the Lord. So the prophet calls to the Lord for mercy and help; even the wild animals pant for the Lord (19,20). God's wrath and love are two sides of the same coin.

Prayer: You, O Lord, are the source of all blessings. I call on you with a repentant and thankful heart.

One Word: Repent and call on the Lord

REND YOUR HEARTS

Joel 2:1-17 (Fri.) August 24

Key Verse: 2:13

1. The Lord's army (1-11)

The locust invasion was an act of God's judgment. The locust spare nothing. Before them, the land is like the Garden of Eden; behind them, a desert waste. They march through the land without breaking rank or swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other, but march straight ahead. They climb in houses like thieves--there is no stopping them. Who can endure? They are the Lord's army. He uses his sovereign authority over nature to bring people to repentance so that he can save them. God uses his sovereignty to accomplish his redemptive purpose.

2. Return to the Lord (12-17)

Repentance cannot be superficial. Tearing one's clothes is not enough; we must offer God our broken and contrite hearts. Repentance is not just regret for sins; it is returning to the Lord with all one's heart and humbly asking him for his mercy. Who knows? He may turn and have pity!

Prayer: Lord, I turn from the world to you this morning. Cleanse my heart. Turn the hearts of the people to you and have mercy on our land.

One Word: Rend your heart; return to the Lord

I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT

Joel 2:18-32 (Sat.) August 25

Key Verse: 2:28

1. Surely he has done great things (18-27)

When the Lord's people plead his mercy, he will hear. He will do great things for them. He will drive the army of locusts into the sea and will restore the land. Trees and vines will bear fruit; the grain harvest will be abundant. The wild animals will rejoice. God's people will know that he is God and there is no other. They will praise his name, for he is with his people.

2. And afterward...(28-32)

God poured out his Spirit--as he promised--after Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins (Jn 7:39). God's Spirit awakens men's hearts. People who only thought of their own selfish pleasure will prophesy--teach God's word. Old men whose dreams were dead will again dream dreams. Young men who only thought of the flesh life will have great vision. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Ro 10:13; Acts 2:21). The Lord pours out his Spirit into repentant hearts.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my sins and give me your Holy Spirit. Raise up a remnant of people who dream your dreams and have your vision for the world.

One Word: Call on the name of the Lord

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

Joel 3:1-21 (Sun.) August 26

Key Verse: 3:18

1. Come quickly, you nations, and assemble (1-16)

One day the Lord will assemble the nations of the world in the valley of Jehoshaphat and judge them. Once, in this valley, King Jehoshaphat had witnessed the Lord's great victory over the nations which had harassed his people (2Ch 20). ("Jehoshaphat" means "the Lord judges.") The Lord will judge the nations according to how they have treated God's people (5,6,7,19). Those who mistreat God's people have no respect for God. That great final day will be like a great battlefield, like a man trampling and crushing grapes in his winepress (13). The day of the Lord is a day of terror for God's enemies.

2. The Lord will be a refuge (17-21)

In the terrible day of God's wrath, God's people will have a refuge--the Lord himself. For God's people, the day of the Lord is a day of blessing (16,18). The fountain that flows from the Lord's house is the water of life for the nations (Jn 7:38; Rev 22:1).

Prayer: Lord, when the world's on fire, let me find refuge in you.

One Word: Take refuge in the Lord