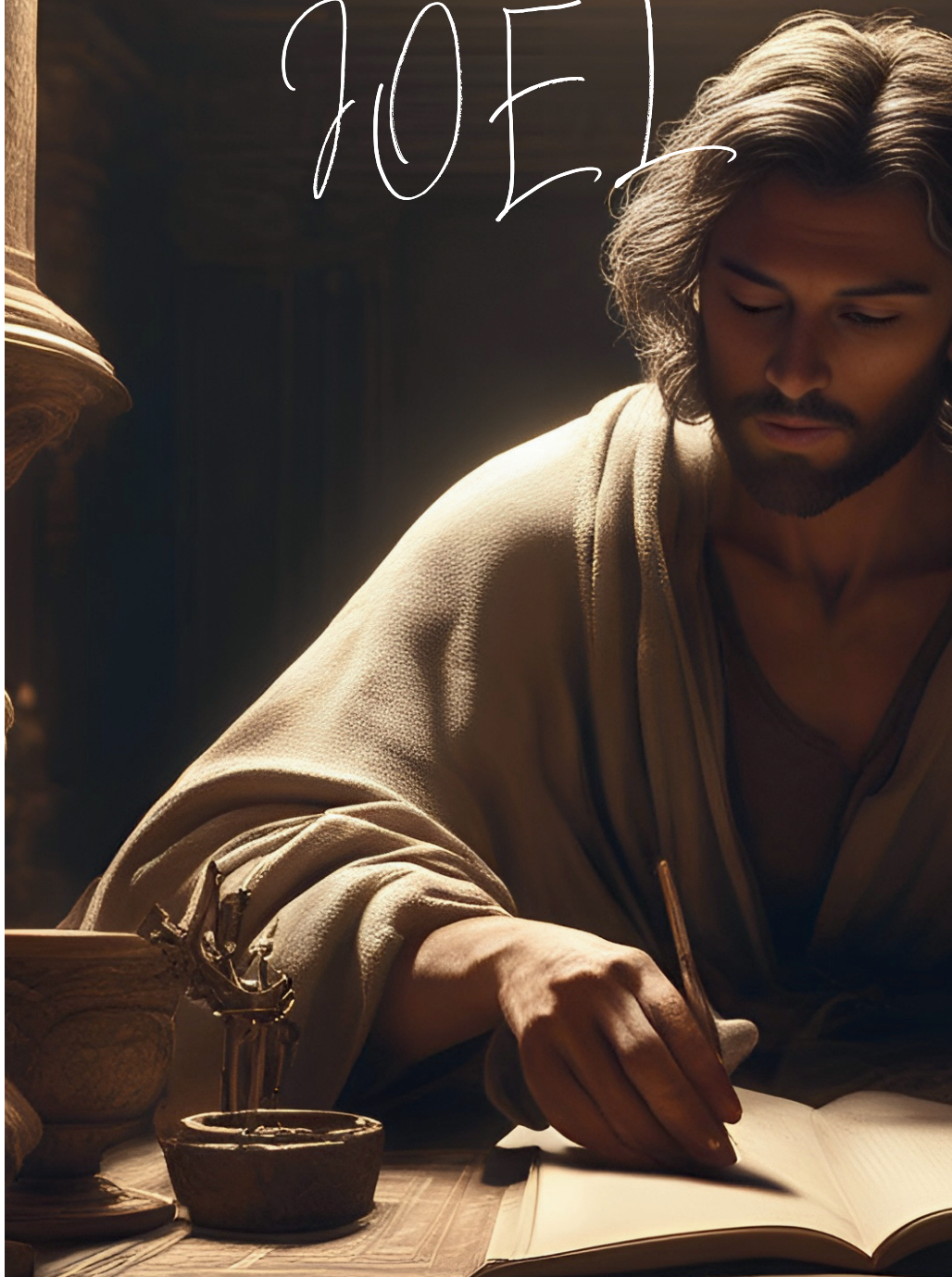


MAJOR LESSONS FROM

JOEL





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# –INTRODUCTION

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On March 11, 2011, a staggering 9.0 magnitude earthquake erupted under the Pacific Ocean, becoming the fifth most powerful earthquake in recorded history.

The resulting 133-foot-high tidal wave of water crashed down upon northeastern Japan, instantly erasing whole towns before washing everything—buildings, boats, houses, livestock, and people—all out to sea. The devastation was unimaginable, and is still being felt to this day.

Now, we might think that the havoc wreaked by insects no more than two inches long could never compare to the devastation of such an earthquake and tsunami—BUT we would be wrong.

Ever since written records were kept, we find evidence of plagues of locusts devastating vast areas of crops. Swarming in their billions, locusts can blot out the sun, cover distances of several hundred miles in twenty-four hours, and jump from one continent to another.

There was a locust invasion cited by the Minor Prophet Joel, and according to that prophet it was *“mighty and without number”* (1:6).

As a matter of fact, it was so destructive that Joel suggested to his fellow countrymen that it was unique in the nation’s history, asking,

**Joel 1:2b**

**2** ...*Has anything like this happened in your days or in your fathers’ days?*

They had stripped the land bare, and Joel summarized the destruction in one of the most graphic verses in the entire Bible:

### **Joel 1:4**

**4** *What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; and what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; and what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.*

Scholars have debated whether these locusts were real or whether they were Joel's vivid metaphor for a vast army of soldiers, BUT it seems best to take the words at face value.

The four terms Joel uses about them may refer to different species of locust or four different stages in the growth of a single species, but the modern American scholar O.

Palmer Robertson covers all the bases when he says:

*"The picture is clear: locusts, locusts, and more locusts."*

Like those people in Japan who lost loved ones and homes, or those people in Joel's day who lost their livelihoods, perhaps you also have suffered a devastating loss, or are even suffering through one now.

When we face losses such as the death of a loved one, a bitter divorce, destruction of property, declining health, financial ruin, betrayal by a friend, and so on, we cannot help but wonder WHY God didn't prevent the loss altogether. We ask ourselves, "Why me?" Or, "Why didn't God stop it?" Or, "Where was God while all this was happening?"

Feeling neglected and abandoned, we can experience a hurt so deep that our faith in God is stretched to the point of snapping.

For some whose faith has already snapped, the rage and bitterness they feel toward God becomes yet another loss for them.

How then do we maintain faith in God through devastating loss? The answer can be found in a little three-chapter book from the Old Testament, written by the Minor Prophet Joel.

## TITLE:

The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate (Vg.) versions follow the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), titling this book after Joel the prophet, the recipient of the message from God (1:1).

The name Joel (יֹאֵל) (*Yo'el*) means "Yahweh is God."

This name is appropriate to the theme of the book, which emphasizes God's sovereign work in history.

The course of \_\_\_\_\_ and nations are in His hands.

The name Joel was very common in Old Testament times, and refers to at least a dozen men in the Old Testament.

But it is referred to only once in the New Testament, in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

## AUTHOR AND DATE:

The author identified himself only as: "*Joel the son of Pethuel*" (1:1).

Pethuel (פֶּתוּאֵל) means: "persuaded by God." And that name appears nowhere else in the Bible.

The prophecy provides little else about the man Joel.

Although he displayed a profound zeal for the temple sacrifices (1:9; 2:13-16), his familiarity with pastoral and agricultural life and his separation from the priests (1:13, 14; 2:17) suggest he was not a Levite.

Extra-biblical tradition records that he was from the tribe of Reuben, from the town of Bethom or Bethharam, located northeast of the Dead Sea on the border of Reuben and Gad.

The context of the prophecy, however, hints that he was a Judean from the \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity, since the tone of a stranger is absent.

Dating the book relies solely on canonical position, historical allusions, and linguistic elements.

Because of:

(1) the lack of any mention of later \_\_\_\_\_ (Assyria, Babylon, or Persia);

(2) the fact that Joel's style is like that of Hosea and Amos rather than like the post-exilic prophets; and

(3) the verbal parallels with other early prophets (Joel 3:16/Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18/Amos 9:13), a late ninth century B.C. date, during the reign of \_\_\_\_\_ (ca. 835-796 B.C.), seems most convincing.

And while the date of the book cannot be known with certainty, the impact on its interpretation is minimal. As you're going to see, the message of Joel is timeless, forming doctrine which could be repeated and applied in any age.

## **BACKGROUND AND SETTING:**

Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia had made frequent military incursions into Israel (3:2ff.).

An extended \_\_\_\_\_ and massive invasion of locusts had stripped every green thing from the land and brought severe economic devastation (1:7-20), leaving the southern kingdom weakened.

This physical disaster gives Joel an illustration for God's \_\_\_\_\_.



Though the locusts were a judgment on sin, God's future judgments during the Day of the Lord will far exceed them. In that day, God will judge His enemies and bless the faithful.

No mention is made of specific sins, nor is Judah rebuked for idolatry. Yet, possibly due to a calloused \_\_\_\_\_, the prophet calls them to a genuine repentance, admonishing them to "*rend your heart, and not your garments*" (2:13).

## KEY WORDS IN JOEL:

**Spirit:** Hebrew *ruach* (רוּחַ): related to a verb meaning "to breathe" or "to blow" (2:28).

It can signify \_\_\_\_\_ (Job 9:18; 19:17); wind (Gen. 8:1; Ex. 10:13); air (Eccl. 1:14; Isa. 26:18); the breath of life, both animal and human (Gen. 6:17; 7:15); disposition or mood (Gen. 41:8; Ezk. 21:7); an evil or distressing spirit (1 Sam. 16:14-16); or the \_\_\_\_\_ of God (Gen. 1:2; Psa. 51:11).

The spirit of life is the gift of God to all creatures (Job 12:10; 33:4; Eccles. 12:7).

The endowment of God's \_\_\_\_\_ is a special gift to believers, which brings spiritual life (Psa. 51:10, 11; 143:10), power (Judg. 6:34), wisdom and understanding (Isa. 11:2), and divine revelation that leads to a better understanding of God's Word and His perfect ways (Joel 2:28; Isa. 61:1, 2).

## KEY NAMES IN JOEL:

**Joel** (יֹאֵל)—prophet to the people of Judah, probably during the reign of Joash (1:1-3:21)

**The people of Judah** (יְהוּדָה)—the southern kingdom (1:2; 2:1; 3:1-2, 19-21)

# HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES:

Joel uses a recent calamity in the nation of Judah to teach his hearers a prophetic lesson. A \_\_\_\_\_ plague had invaded the land, destroying every green thing in its path.

Grapevines were stripped clean; grain fields lay bare; fruit trees stood leafless and unproductive. The devastation was so complete that even grain offerings to God were impossible.

Joel stresses the sovereign power of Yahweh over nature and nations, and shares how God uses nature to get man's \_\_\_\_\_.

As bad as the locust plague was, it would pale in comparison with what God was about to bring upon His people. An army from the \_\_\_\_\_ would come to attack the nation, leaving behind devastation even more complete than that of the locusts.

The only hope for Joel's hearers was heartfelt \_\_\_\_\_ before that terrible day were to arrive.

Thus, the overarching theme of Joel is—***the Day of the Lord***. It permeates all parts of Joel's message, making it the most sustained treatment of the Day of the Lord in the entire Old Testament (1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14).

The phrase is employed nineteen times by eight different Old Testament authors:

Isaiah—2:12; 13:6, 9;

Ezekiel—13:5; 30:3;

Joel—1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14;

Amos—5:18 (2x), 20;

Obadiah—1:15;

Zephaniah—1:7, 14 (2x);

Zechariah—14:1;

Malachi—4:5

The phrase does not have reference to a chronological time period, but to a general period of wrath and \_\_\_\_\_ uniquely belonging to the Lord.

It is the day that unveils His character as \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth—*mighty, powerful,* and *holy*, thus terrifying His enemies.

The Day of the Lord does not always refer solely to an eschatological event (relating to the End Times).

On occasion it has a near \_\_\_\_\_ fulfillment, as seen in Ezekiel 13:5, where it speaks of the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem.

As is common in prophecy, the near fulfillment is a historic event which \_\_\_\_\_ the more distant, eschatological fulfillment.

The Day of the Lord is frequently associated with seismic disturbances (Joel 2:1-11; 2:31; 3:16), violent weather (Ezk. 13:11-14), clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15), and cosmic upheaval (Joel 2:3, 30).

It's referred to as a "*great and very awesome day*" (2:11) that would "*come as destruction from the Almighty*" (1:15).

It is a day when judgment is poured out on sinners, judgment that subsequently leads to blessings on the penitent and reaffirmation of God's covenant with His people.

The latter half of Joel depicts time subsequent to the Day of the Lord in terms of promise and \_\_\_\_\_.

There will be a pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, accompanied by prophetic utterances, dreams, visions (Joel 2:28, 29), as well as the coming of Elijah, an epiphany bringing restoration and hope (Mal. 4:5, 6).

As a result of the Day of the Lord there will be physical blessings, \_\_\_\_\_, and prosperity (Joel 2:21-25; 3:16-21).

In summary, Joel was written as a warning to the people of Judah of their need to humbly turn to the Lord with repentant hearts (2:12-17) so that God could bless rather than buffet them.

If they continued to spurn God's gracious call for repentance, judgment would be inevitable.

## KEY DOCTRINES IN JOEL:

**The Day of the Lord**—a general period of wrath and judgment from the Lord; the day in which God unveils His character as Judge (Joel 1:15; 2:1-11, 31; 3:16).

## GOD'S CHARACTER IN JOEL:

God is \_\_\_\_\_ -2:12

God is slow to anger-2:13

God is gracious-2:13

God is \_\_\_\_\_ for His people-2:18

God is a God of vengeance on His people's enemies- 3:1-21

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE:

Joel is characterized by graphic style and vivid descriptions.

He makes striking use of a historical event as an illustrative foundation for the overall message of the book.

Although \_\_\_\_\_ was the first prophet to mention the Day of the Lord (Obad. 1:15), Joel was the first to develop this important Biblical theme.

Other references to the Day of the Lord include—

Isa. 2:12, 17-20; 13:6-9; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Mal. 4:5-6; Acts 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10.

In His \_\_\_\_\_ (Mat. 24:29), Jesus associated the events mentioned in Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15 with the signs of His Second Coming.

\_\_\_\_\_ quoted Joel 2:28-32 in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21, but stopped in the middle of verse 32, indicating that part of the prophecy was yet to be fulfilled in the future.

And the Apostle \_\_\_\_\_, in Romans 10:12-13, applied Joel 2:32 to the salvation available to both Jews and Gentiles who trust in Christ.

And finally, it is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and 2 Peter 3:10 that the Day of the Lord is a \_\_\_\_\_ event from the New Testament perspective.

## CHRIST IN JOEL:

Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit after His ascension to the Father (John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8).

When this was fulfilled on the Day of \_\_\_\_\_, Peter said, *"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel"* (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21).

The final fulfillment of Joel's prophecy will come in the \_\_\_\_\_ Kingdom of Christ when God's Spirit is poured out on all creation.

Joel also portrays Christ as the One Who will judge the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2, 12).

# ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS:

**First:** What is the relationship of chapter 2 to chapter 1?

It is preferable to view chapter 1 as describing an \_\_\_\_\_ invasion of locusts that devastated the land.

In chapter 2, a heightened level of description engages the interpreter.

Here the prophet is projecting something \_\_\_\_\_ the locust plague of chapter 1, elevating the level of description to new heights, with increased intensity that is focused, not only on the plague, but also on the immediate necessity for true repentance.

The prophet's choice of similes, such as "*like the appearance of horses*" (2:4) and "*like mighty men*" (2:7), suggests that he is still using the actual locusts to illustrate an invasion that can only be the massive overtaking of the final Day of the Lord.

**Second:** Does Joel's account mean the land of Israel was actually overrun with locusts?

Insect plagues such as the one reported by Joel are well known in many parts of the world.

Joel described at length the different stages of life, or the different types of locusts (1:4).

The vivid \_\_\_\_\_ included by Joel increase the usefulness of the event as a teaching tool, but they also emphasize the fact that the prophet saw before his eyes the devastated remains of his nation.

Joel's prophetic vision of the Day of the Lord elevated the tragedy of the locusts to become an illustration of the final devastation.

In the prophet's \_\_\_\_\_, the locusts are *"like the appearance of horses"* (2:4) and *"like mighty men"* (2:7), but the underlying message announces the coming Day when real horses and men will arrive on the scene bringing God's judgment.

**Third:** When Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 at the beginning of his sermon in Acts 2:16-21, how did his interpretation relate to the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy?

Some have viewed the events of Acts 2 and the destruction of Jerusalem in \_\_\_\_\_ as the fulfillment of the Joel passage. Others have reserved its ultimate fulfillment for the final Day of the Lord.

It appears most likely that the initial pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not a total fulfillment, but a \_\_\_\_\_ and sample of the Spirit's power and work.

The full outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come in the Messiah's Kingdom after the Day of the Lord. That was the ultimate vision in Joel's prophecy.

## OUTLINE:

Following Joel 1:1, the contents of the book are arranged under three basic categories.

In the **first section (1:2-20)** the prophet describes the \_\_\_\_\_ Day of the Lord.

The land is suffering massive devastation caused by a locust plague and drought.

The details of the calamity (1:2-12) are followed by a summons to national penitence and reformation (1:13-20).

The **second section (2:1-17)** provides a transition from the historical plague of locusts described in chapter 1 to the \_\_\_\_\_ Day of the Lord in 2:18-3:21.

Employing the contemporary infestation of locusts as a backdrop, the prophet, with an increased level of intensity, paints a vivid and forceful picture of the impending visitation of the Lord, and, with powerful and explicit terminology, tenaciously renews the appeal for repentance (2:12-17).

In the **third section (2:18-3:21)**, the Lord speaks directly, assuring His people of His \_\_\_\_\_ among them (2:27; 3:17, 21).

This portion of the book assumes that the repentance solicited (2:12-17) had occurred, and describes the Lord's zealous response (2:18, 19a) to their prayer.

Joel 2:18-21 forms the \_\_\_\_\_ in the message from lamentation and woe to divine assurances of God's presence and the reversal of the calamities.

The Lord then gives three promises to assure the penitents of His presence:

- ☞ \_\_\_\_\_ restoration through the divine healing of their land (2:21-27),
- ☞ spiritual restoration through the divine outpouring of His Spirit (2:28-32),
- ☞ and \_\_\_\_\_ restoration through the divine judgment on the unrighteous (3:1-21).

Another way to outline the book of Joel is as follows:

## **I. Day of the Lord Experienced: Historical (1:1-20)**

- A. Source of the Message (1:1)
- B. Command to Contemplate the Devastation (1:2-3)
- C. Completeness of the Devastation (1:4-12)
- D. Call to Repent in Light of the Devastation (1:13-20)

## **II. Day of the Lord Illustrated: Transitional (2:1-17)**

- A. Alarm Sounds (2:1)



- B. Army Invades (2:2-11)
- C. Admonition to Repent (2:12-17)

### III. Day of the Lord Described: Eschatological (2:18-3:21)

- A. Introduction (2:18-20)
- B. Material Restoration (2:21-27)
- C. Spiritual Restoration (2:28-32)
- D. National Restoration (3:1-21)

## THE MEAT OF THE BOOK OF JOEL:

### The Day of the Lord & the Sovereignty of God

As mentioned already, the phrase *"the Day of the Lord"* occurs many times in the Old Testament, always referring to \_\_\_\_\_ times or events.

Sometimes those events are imminent, and sometimes they are to occur years later, all of them leading up to the final *"Day of the Lord"* during the Tribulation.

Joel now uses it to explain the source and significance of the plague of locusts, and he does so by drawing the people of Judah's attention to two massively important truths.

The first of these is that **God is** \_\_\_\_\_.

For many people, the plague would have been seen as a natural disaster that raised painful questions.

How could God allow such a thing to happen to His covenant people?

Why should they have been exposed to a terror over which they had no control?

Some may even have found themselves as stripped of \_\_\_\_\_ as their land had been of vegetation.

Joel's response however was to see the deadly invasion of locusts through a very different lens.

Although the word " \_\_\_\_\_ " (just like the word "trinity") does not occur anywhere on its pages, the Bible is saturated with the subject, beginning with the very first verse:

**Genesis 1:1**

**1** *In the beginning, **God created** the heavens and the earth.*

The Hebrews had no single word to describe what we would now call "the universe," and the phrase "the heavens and the earth" simply means all \_\_\_\_\_ outside of God Himself.



Quote:

*"The absolute creation of all things out of nothing. All things, from angels to amino-acids, from light to life, from galaxies to gravitons, from stars to stem cells, from time to termites, from space to spiders, from elephants to electrons, from lizards to the laws of physics, all were created by God. There is not a single atom, proton, neutron, photon, quasar, or quark that God did not bring into existence. In his revelation of things to come the Apostle John recorded heavenly beings worshipping God by crying out, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created' (Revelation 4:11)."*

*– Douglas Kelly*

Yet the sovereignty of God goes far beyond creation. It also means that God is in constant and \_\_\_\_\_ control of all that He created.

He told Isaiah,

**Isaiah 46:10b**

**10** ...*"My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure."*

One of the psalmists declares,

**Psalm 115:3**

**3** *But our God is in the heavens; **He does whatever He pleases.***

God is not an absentee landlord Who created the universe and then left it to fend for itself. Instead, He controls every \_\_\_\_\_ of it and everything that lives in it.

**Quote:**

*"God is deemed omnipotent not because He can indeed act, yet sometimes ceases and sits in idleness, or continues by a general impulse that order of nature which He previously appointed; but because, governing heaven and earth by His providence, He so regulates all things that nothing takes place without His deliberation."*

– John Calvin

**Quote:**

*"If there is one molecule in this universe running around loose outside the scope or the sphere of God's divine control and authority and power . . . it would mean that God is not sovereign. If there is any element of the universe that is outside of His authority, then He is no longer God over all. . . God owns what He makes, and He rules what He owns." – R. C. Sproul*

If He is not \_\_\_\_\_, He is not God.

If He is not \_\_\_\_\_, He is not sovereign.

When things go wrong we have a tendency to concentrate our thinking on secondary causes instead of looking beyond them to their ultimate source.

From what he is about to say, it is obvious that Joel's prophecy drives home the same truth and sees the hand of God behind the invasion.

Far from being outside of His control, God called it, "**My great army**, which I sent among you" (2:25).

The locusts swept across the land in their billions, but not a single one of them could have moved a wing unless God had \_\_\_\_\_ that it would be so.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD & GOD'S JUDGMENT:

### Quote:

"God **whispers** to us in our pleasures, **speaks** in our conscience, but **shouts** in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Joel anticipated Lewis by nearly 3,000 years, and the second massively important truth he wanted to convey to his fellow countrymen was that in sending the plague—**God was \_\_\_\_\_ to them.**

Some people, no doubt, saw the locust plague as a natural disaster with no explanation. Joel wanted them not merely to **see** it, but to \_\_\_\_\_ it telling them that it was God's judgment on them because of their sin.

Centuries before, God had warned their predecessors that if they turned away from Him,

**Deuteronomy 28:38**

**38** "You shall bring out much seed to the field, but you will gather in little, **for the locust will consume it.**"

Now He was putting His warning into reality.

Yet God's aim was NOT the people's destruction, BUT RATHER their \_\_\_\_\_; and no sooner has Joel laid out the devastating effects of the plague than he issues a call to repentance, urging them to consider their ways and to turn back to God.

# THE DAY OF THE LORD & GOD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE:

Joel emphasizes the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ by adding further instructions:

## **Joel 1:14**

**14** Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and **cry out to the Lord**.

\_\_\_\_\_ is often mentioned in the Old Testament and specifically linked with confessing sin and seeking God's favor.

For example, when disaster threatened Israel, Samuel, the last of the nation's judges and its first prophet, gathered the people at Mizpah *"and fasted on that day and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord'. . . And Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel..."* (1 Samuel 7:6, 9).

Just as *"all inhabitants of the land"* (1:2) were to hear Joel's announcement about the plague, so they were all to understand its meaning and engage in wholehearted repentance.

Later in his prophecy, Joel drives this home by giving no fewer than \_\_\_\_\_ directives to ensure that it was done:

*"Blow a trumpet in Zion,"*

*"Consecrate a fast,"*

*"Proclaim a solemn assembly,"*

*"Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,"*

*"Assemble the elders,"*

*"Gather the children and the nursing infants,"*

*"Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber,"*

*"Let the priests, the LORD's ministers, weep..."*

(Joel 2:15-17a).

\_\_\_\_\_ was to be overlooked.

Pleading old age wouldn't work. Having babies and children to look after was no excuse. Newlyweds were expected to interrupt their honeymoon. Priests were to come weeping.

So, WHY was this \_\_\_\_\_ call to repentance SO rigorous and urgent?

Because, as well as wreaking terrible havoc, the plague of locusts was also to be a stark warning that IF the people failed to repent, an even more devastating \_\_\_\_\_ was to follow very shortly.

Joel writes about this in 2:1-11 and says the people should tremble, "*For the day of the Lord is **coming**; surely it is **near***" (2:1).

In this case it may have meant a foreign military invasion, BUT whatever it was, it would be under God's immediate and total control: "***The Lord utters His voice before His army**; surely His camp is very great, for strong is He Who carries out His Word*" (2:11a).

Although Joel contains no direct prophecy about the coming Messiah and nowhere identifies Him, he does link future judgment on the nation of Israel with events that lie \_\_\_\_\_ the coming, death, and resurrection of Jesus; and Joel does say that at some time in the future, terrible events would take place.

There would be "*blood and fire and columns of smoke . . . the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood*" (2:30-31).

The whole of Chapter 3 is taken up with Joel recording God's direct words on the subject.

"*All the nations*" would be brought to "*the Valley of Jehoshaphat*" (3:2).

Joel's message lists a fearful catalogue of dreadful events—past, present, and future—AND YET his prophecy also rings with hope rooted in the \_\_\_\_\_ of a sovereign God Who is “a refuge to His people” (3:16).

This brings us to our “major point”—**God \_\_\_\_\_ the penitent.**

### **Joel 2:32**

**32** “And it will come about that **whoever calls** on the name of the Lord **will be delivered** [saved]....”

Joel's message was to different parts of society, but it was the same to all of them—they were to “cry out to the Lord” (1:14).

We have already seen that this was not to be a purely formal religious ceremony.

There was to be a “solemn assembly” (1:14), and Joel announced, “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble” (2:1).

It was a call to \_\_\_\_\_ repentance, and God himself issued it:

### **Joel 2:12-13a**

**12** “‘Yet even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning;

**13** and rend your heart and not your garments.’”

Other than the reference to drunkards in Chapter 1, no specific sin is mentioned, but Joel's passionate \_\_\_\_\_ and God's searching command are clear indications that things were seriously wrong.

The call to “rend your hearts and not your garments” shows that God was looking for more than an outward \_\_\_\_\_ of repentance.

In Biblical times tearing one's clothing was a symbol of *sorrow, grief, or distress*. But there is more to true repentance than simply apologizing to God—even with torn garments, *i.e.*, an outward show of grief.

~ **True repentance involves a change of \_\_\_\_\_.**

The person who truly repents has a totally different view of sin from the one they previously held.

They no longer see sin as \_\_\_\_\_, or merely a personal matter and entirely their own business.

Instead, they realize that all sin is an offense against God.

**Quote:**

*"Sin is a serious business to God, and it becomes a serious business to us when we reflect upon the fact that every sin, regardless of how seemingly insignificant it appears to us, is an expression of contempt towards the sovereign authority of God."*  
– Jerry Bridges

~ **True repentance involves a change of \_\_\_\_\_.**

Repentance means being \_\_\_\_\_ as we realize that sin is not only the cause of everything degrading and shameful in human experience, BUT that it was sin—OUR sin—that nailed Jesus to the cross and brought His earthly life to such a horrific end.

~ **True repentance involves a change of \_\_\_\_\_.**

God has nowhere undertaken to forgive a sin that a man is not prepared to forsake.

Repentance involves not only an **inner change** of heart and mind, BUT in addition to all of that, an \_\_\_\_\_ **change** of life.

When John the Baptist was baptizing those who confessed their sins, hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to get in on the act, but John turned them away, bluntly telling them, "**Bear fruit in keeping with repentance**" (Mat. 3:8).



The symbolic act of baptism would mean nothing if it were not matched by a change of life.

We dare not miss one other note: the people in Joel's day were to repent "*even now*" (Joel 2:12a).

The call to repentance was \_\_\_\_\_, because an even greater disaster than the invasion of locusts was imminent.

God's call to repentance—now as then—is **always** urgent.

\_\_\_\_\_ obedience is disobedience.

The person who puts off repentance even for a day, has one day more to repent of, and a day less in which to do so.

It is common to think of the call to repentance as something to be preached to unbelievers, BUT most of the calls for repentance in the Bible are addressed to those who at least nominally belong to the family of faith.

To fine-tune this in New Testament terms, godly \_\_\_\_\_ for sin is one of the signs of being a true Christian.

Jesus made this clear in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*" (Mat. 5:4).

This does not mean having a poor self-image, or always seeing the blackest side of things.

The blessing Jesus promises is to those believers whose hearts are so tenderized by the Holy Spirit that they \_\_\_\_\_ whenever He makes them aware of sin in their lives.

True repentance before God is an earnest cry from the heart, NOT a superficial repetition of pious words.

The promise God makes to all who call upon Him in this way is that *“they shall be delivered [\_\_\_\_\_]”* (Joel 2:32).

As far as Joel’s hearers were concerned, this would mean a complete reversal of their desperate plight.

God promised,

**Joel 2:25**

**25** *“Then **I will make up to you** for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”*

He specifically mentioned sending *“the early and the latter rain, as before”* (2:23), so that at harvest time *“the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with new wine and oil”* (2:24).

The people were told that as a result of God’s gracious response to their repentance, *“You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you”* (2:26).

This was all perfectly in tune with God’s promise elsewhere:

**2 Chronicles 7:14**

**14** *“...[if] My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, **then I will hear** from Heaven, **will forgive** their sin, and **will heal their land.**”*

God’s promise to deal graciously with His people was the outworking of His \_\_\_\_\_ love for them, which runs like a golden thread throughout the Old Testament and is beautifully expressed in the assurance given to the prophet Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 31:3**

**3** *“I have loved you with **an everlasting love**; therefore I have drawn you with **lovingkindness.**”*

# LIST OF PROPHECIES:

The following is a complete list of prophecies found in the book of Joel.

Possible fulfillment time periods include—

the Old Testament, the First Coming of Christ, the Last Days (our age), the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Eternal State.

## Statistics

Total Verses: 73

Prophetic Verses: 47

Prophetic Percentage: \_\_\_\_\_%

## Prophetic Count

✓ Historically Fulfilled: 0

❖ Partial Fulfillment: 3

❖ Awaiting Future Fulfillment: 10

## Prophecies

### Joel 1:15

**15** *Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as **destruction** from the Almighty.*

➤ **Prophecy:** Judah will be invaded and devastated.

❖ **Status:** Partial Fulfillment (2 Kings 18:13), Awaiting Future Fulfillment (2 Thessalonians 2:2)



**Period:** Old Testament, Tribulation

## **Joel 2:1-11**

*Blow a trumpet in Zion,  
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the Lord is coming;  
Surely it is near...*

(Portions quoted by Jesus in Matthew 24:29).

➤ **Prophecy:** The land of Israel will be invaded and devastated in the “day of the Lord” (Tribulation).

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment



**Period:** Tribulation

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## **Joel 2:20**

*“But I will **remove the northern army** far from you,  
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,  
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,  
And its rear guard into the western sea.  
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,  
For it has done great things.”*

➤ **Prophecy:** A prophecy pertaining to the imminent destruction of the Antichrist's forces.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment



**Period:** Tribulation

## **Joel 2:24**

*The threshing floors will be **full** of grain,  
And the vats will **overflow** with the new wine and oil.*

➤ **Prophecy:** The land of Judah will once again be agriculturally productive and abundant.

❖ **Status:** Partial Fulfillment (Mid-7th Century BC, 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century), Awaiting Future Fulfillment



**Period:** Old Testament, Last Days, Millennial Kingdom

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## **Joel 2:26-27**

*"You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied  
and **praise the name of the Lord your God,**  
Who has dealt wondrously with you;  
then **My people will never be put to shame.**  
Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
and that **I am the Lord your God,**  
and there is no other;  
and **My people will never be put to shame.**"*

➤ **Prophecy:** Israel, once more faithful, will become the prime nation in the world and no longer fear derision.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment



**Period:** Millennial Kingdom

## **Joel 2:28-32**

*"It will come about after this*

*That **I will pour out My Spirit** on all mankind;*

*And your sons and daughters will prophesy,*

*Your old men will dream dreams,*

*Your young men will see visions.*

*Even on the male and female servants*

***I will pour out My Spirit** in those days.*

*I will display **wonders in the sky and on the earth,***

*Blood, fire and columns of smoke.*

*The sun will be turned into darkness*

*And the moon into blood*

*Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*

*And it will come about that **whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered;***

*for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem*

*there will be those who escape,*

*as the Lord has said,*

*even among the survivors whom the Lord calls."*

➤ **Prophecy:** A great outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come just before the Messiah returns (vv. 28-29), causing nature to respond with a cataclysm (vv. 30-31), resulting in the salvation of a Jewish remnant (v. 32).

❖ **Status:** Partial Fulfillment (great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost), Awaiting Future Fulfillment

 **Period:** Last Days, Tribulation, Second Coming

### **Joel 3:1-2**

*"For behold, in those days and at that time,  
when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,*

***I will gather all the nations***

*and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.*

*Then **I will enter into judgment with them** there*

*on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,*

*whom they have scattered among the nations;*

*and they have divided up My land."*

➤ **Prophecy:** The Lord will gather both Jews and Gentiles into the Valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment (Sheep-Goat Judgment, see Matthew 25:31-46)



**Period:** Second Coming

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### **Joel 3:9-16**

**9** *Proclaim this among the nations:*

***prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!***

*Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!*

**10** *Beat your plowshares into swords*

*and your pruning hooks into spears;*

*let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."*

**11** *Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,*

*and gather yourselves there.*

*Bring down, O Lord, Your mighty ones.*

**12** *Let the nations be aroused*

*And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,*

***For there I will sit to judge***

***All the surrounding nations.***

**13** Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.  
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;  
the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

**14** Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

**For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.**

**15** The sun and moon grow dark  
And the stars lose their brightness.

**16** The Lord roars from Zion  
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,  
And the heavens and the earth tremble.

**But the Lord is a refuge for His people**

**And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.**

➤ **Prophecy:** The Lord will gather the armies of the world together for a final battle (Armageddon), then the Messiah will return while nature responds with an uproar (vv.14-15), and in the aftermath both surviving Jews and Gentiles will be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment (vv.12-16).

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment (Sheep-Goat Judgment; see Matthew 25:31-46)



**Period:** Tribulation, Second Coming

### **Joel 3:17-21**

**17** Then you will know that I am the Lord your God,  
**dwelling in Zion**, My holy mountain.

So Jerusalem will be holy,  
and strangers will pass through it no more.

**18** And in that day  
the mountains will drip with sweet wine,  
and the hills will flow with milk,  
and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;  
and **a spring will go out from the house of the Lord**  
to water the valley of Shittim.



**19** Egypt will become a waste,  
and Edom will become a desolate wilderness,  
because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,  
in whose land they have shed innocent blood.

**20** But Judah will be inhabited forever  
and Jerusalem for all generations.

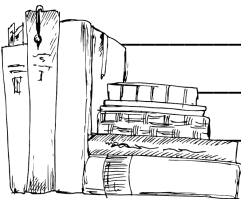
**21** And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, **for the Lord dwells in Zion.**

➤ **Prophecy:** While the Messiah reigns from His throne in the rebuilt Jerusalem (vv. 17, 20), fresh waters will flow out of Jerusalem to make the land fertile once more (v. 18), and Israel will abide in their own land forever (v. 20).

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment



**Period:** Millennial Kingdom

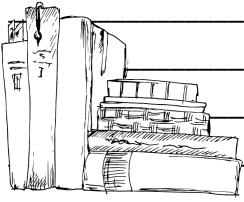


## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

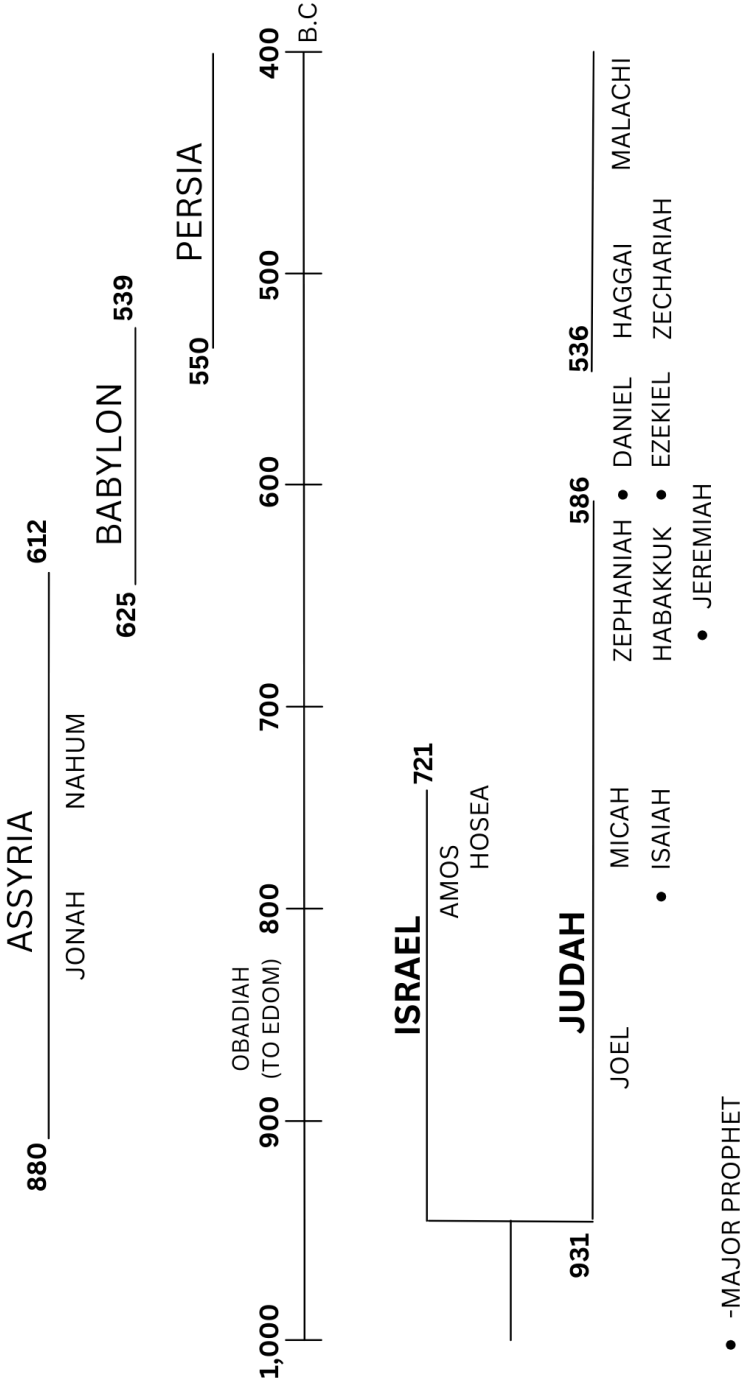
- What kind of devastating loss am I now experiencing, or have experienced in the past?
- Why does it feel at times as if God is not there for me or just doesn't care?
- How can God be sovereign and yet still allow bad things to happen?
- When God's presence is evident in the pain I'm experiencing, how do I respond?
- What did I learn from going through hard times?
- Have I been able to help others who have experienced the same, or similar, losses as I have?
- How have I been blessed by God since the loss?
- When Jesus returns on the Day of the Lord, will He be my blessed hope, or will His presence strike terror into my heart?
- What future blessings has God promised me?

**NOTES:**

A series of horizontal lines for writing notes.



# Chronology of the Prophets of Israel and Judah



**OBADIAH**  
845 BC

**EDOM**

**JONAH**  
755 BC

**NINEVAH**

**NAHUM**  
650 BC

**AMOS**  
760 BC

**HOSEA**  
725 BC

**722 BC**

NORTHERN KINGDOM

**ISRAEL**

**931 BC**

**JUDAH**

SOUTHERN KINGDOM

**JOEL**  
835 BC

**MICAH**  
735 BC

**ZEPHANIAH**  
630 BC

**HABAKKUK**  
609 BC

**586 BC**

**EXILE**

**538 BC**

**RETURN**

**480 BC**

**ZECARIAH**

**HAGGAI**  
520 BC

**452 BC**

**MALACHI**

## THEMES

**HOSEA:** GOD IS FAITHFUL

**JOEL:** GOD IS WRATHFUL

**AMOS:** GOD IS JUST

**OBADIAH:** GOD IS JEALOUS

**JONAH:** GOD IS MERCIFUL

**MICAH:** GOD SEES EVERYTHING

**NAHUM:** GOD IS PATIENT

**HABAKKUK:** GOD WANTS OUR FAITH

**ZEPHANIAH:** GOD IS WITH US

**HAGGAI:** GOD WANTS FIRST PLACE

**ZECHARIAH:** GOD PICKED JERUSALEM

**MALACHI:** GOD WANTS OUR LOVE