

Majoring on the Minors

Week 2: Joel

2 June 2024

Last week we tackled the longer story and message of Hosea, but this week we have only three chapters to deal with as we open up to Joel. This is the second in a series on the *Minor Prophets*, those relatively short books constitute the final twelve books of the Old Testament. We are taking a week to survey each one with a view to grasping their individual themes, which you will see, are as relevant now as then.

Pastor Eric

Opening Up: What's your favorite vegetable?

Your challenge this week is to read the entire Book of Joel. Pay attention to its flow, themes, and repeated phrases. Having read Joel, can you discern if the book was written to the northern nation of Israel or to the southern kingdom of Judah?

There are a few questions that characterize the Book of Joel. One concerns its date. Just for the record, know that scholars today are locked in debate over what time period Joel refers to. If you want to dig into the issue, read a good introduction to Joel.

It's quite clear that the first chapter deals with the aftermath of a devastating locust invasion. In fact, notice how the chapter ends with mourning. What sorts of feelings emerge from chapter 1? Imagine what it would feel like to literally lose all of your crops in such a series of plagues. Note that according to Joel 2.25, the plagues lasted a period of years.

Another perennial question about Joel pops up in chapter 2. Do you think Joel 2 describes another actual locust invasion, or is it a highly metaphorical way to talk about an invading army? Either way, as you look at Joel 2.12-17, what is God calling the people to do about it? The next section implies that the people really responded by turning to the Lord on this "day of the LORD." Do you see evidence of that?

Beginning in Joel 2.18, there comes a flow of four general things God is going to do because his people return to him. What's the first? The second response of God in Joel 2.28 begins with, "Afterward." What is the promise outlined there? Chapter 3.1-16 identifies a third result of their turning to him, while verse 17 introduces the fourth. As you look at that last section (3.17-21), what do you think it points to?

We have "insider information" about the second promise that comes in Joel 2.28-32 because it reappears in Acts 2. Looking at Acts 2, how does Peter interpret the arrival of the Holy Spirit in verse 16?

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Acts 2.1-4

We observed that the "day of the LORD" is both a frightening day (Joel 2.31) and a day of salvation (2.32). Looking at verse 32, who experiences this day of salvation?

Peter links calling on the name of the Lord to receiving the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2.38. At the most ominous moments of our lives, God continues to invite us to call upon him and be touched by his very Spirit. How has the Spirit responded to you in the past when you've called on God? What is it that you most need to call on the name of LORD for today? For more encouragement, read Psalm 46.