

Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Joel

Historical background

- It is uncertain as to when the book of Joel was written. Some believe that he was one of the “earliest of the minor prophets”¹ because “the Minor Prophets are roughly arranged in chronological order.”² However, most scholars (including me) believe that Joel was written hundreds of years after Hosea in the post-exilic era (after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon)³. If you are interested in knowing more about the date of authorship for the book of Joel, see me afterwards for some helpful resources.
- Assuming, we are right in dating Joel after the period of Babylonian exile. We have quite a few major events that have occurred since the time of Hosea. We will highlight a few of them to get our historical bearings...
 - 722 The fall of Israel (northern kingdom) to Assyria
 - Ministry of Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah
 - Famous kings include Hezekiah (716-687) and Josiah (640-609)
 - 586 The fall of Judah, the destruction of the temple, and exile in Babylon
 - The ministry of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Obadiah
 - 539 Babylon defeated by Cyrus of Persia
 - 538 Zerubbabel leads 42,000 exiles back to Israel/Judah
 - The Temple is rebuilt
 - The ministry of Haggai and Zechariah during the rebuilding of the temple

Book Overview

Chapter 1: A plague of locusts

- Judah is enduring the worst ‘natural’ disaster that it can remember. We know this because of Joel’s own words...
 - ❖ Joel 1:2-3--*Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? 3 Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.*
- So what had happened?
 - ❖ Joel 1:4--*What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.*
- To our American and non-horticultural ears, this may not seem like a big deal but it was. The locust had destroyed all of Judah’s crops. They had eaten the grain, the grapes, the figs and fruit trees and thus every level of society was devastated, no one was spared. This was universal and utter devastation.

¹ Charles Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, p.71

² Duanne Garrett, *The New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel*

³ R.C. Sproul, *New Geneva Introduction to the Old Testament*

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- And what he says to them would be exceedingly controversial in our day. Joel believes that God is the one who has brought this plague upon them. Among American evangelicals, it has become quite unpopular to believe that God would do such a thing. Yet, the book of Deuteronomy shows us that a plague of locust is exactly what God might send if his people abandon him for other Gods.
 - ❖ Deuteronomy 28:36-38--*you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. 37 And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away. 38 You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it*
 - ❖ Deuteronomy 28:42--*The cricket shall possess all your trees and the fruit of your ground*
- Furthermore, the Lord himself confirms for us that it was indeed he who sent the locusts
 - ❖ Joel 2:25--*I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.*
- So the question is...why? Why would God ever do something so horrendous to people he claims to love as his own children? To answer this question we must remember that the Lord has once before used a plague of locusts to deliver his people. In the book of Exodus, God relentlessly sent plague after plague (ten in all, with the 8th one being locusts) upon Egypt to demonstrate his infinite power and to free his people from their bondage. Now, he again sends a plague of locusts to demonstrate his infinite power and to free his people from their bondage. Through this plague, God is shaking Judah. They are on the path to eternal damnation and to prevent them from continuing on that path, he reminds them of his destructive power for those who oppose him so that his people might repent and avoid true and utter destruction on “the day of the Lord.” We see this towards the end of chapter one...
 - ❖ Joel 1:13-15--*Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. 14 Consecrate a fast; call 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. 15 Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.*
 - In verses 13-14, the prophet calls the people to repent
 - In verse 15, we find out why he calls them to repent. These locusts are a foreshadowing of the destruction to come upon them if they don’t.

Chapter 2:1-11: The day of the Lord is coming

- At the start of Chapter 2, Joel uses Judah’s horrific experience with the locusts to try to convey just how terrible “the day of the Lord” is going to be for them if they do not heed his words. In this, he has two points of emphasis...
 1. The day of the Lord is soon
 - ❖ Joel 2:1--*...the day of the Lord is coming; it is near,*
 - the obvious implication of this statement is that time to repent is limited.
 2. The day of the Lord will be similar to the locusts
 - Locusts can swarm in such huge numbers that they block all light, so it will be on the day of the Lord...

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- ❖ Joel 2:2--*a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains*
- ❖ Joel 2:10--*The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.*
- Nothing stops locusts, Not mountains, not walls, nor weapons of man. They will not be stopped. So to is the day of the Lord...
 - ❖ Joel 2:5--*As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle.*
 - ❖ Joel 2:7-9--*Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. 8 They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. 9 They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief.*
- Before locusts arrive, the land is lush and green, After the locusts come the land is utterly devastated. So it will be on the day of the Lord.
 - ❖ Joel 2:3--*The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them*
- Thus, Joel uses Judah's horrifying experience with the locusts to warn them that...
 - ❖ Joel 2:11--*the day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it?*

Chapter 2:12-17: A call to repentance

- Joel calls his people to radical repentance. He does not ask them to modify their behavior. He is looking for a change of heart...
 - ❖ Joel 2:12-13--*"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments.*
 - ❖ Joel 2:17--*Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep*
- This call to repentance is urgent. It is to be everyone's top priority.
 - ❖ Joel 2:15-16--*Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; 16 gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.*

Chapter 2:18-32: God's response to Judah's repentance

- God responds to Judah's repentance two fold. He heals all the harm that he has done through the locusts and he replaces his threat of doom on "the day of the Lord" with a promise of spiritual revival.
 1. God brings healing from the recent disaster (Joel 2:18-27). This section of Joel is very similar to Job 42. In Job 42, Job repents earnestly (Job 42:2-6).
 - ❖ Job 42:5-6-- *I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*
 - God then responds to this repentance by restoring to Job all that he has taken from him and then some (Job 42:10-16)
 - ❖ Job 42:10--*...And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before*

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- Here in Joel 2:18-27, all that the locusts have taken is being restored...
 - ❖ Joel 2:24-26--*“The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25 I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. 26 “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame*
 - No longer will Judah be the scorn of the nations. No longer will Judah be vulnerable to a northern enemy. No longer will Judah starve. God has brought about prosperity, security, and bounty to his people.
- 2. God replaces future doom with future spiritual revival (Joel 2:28-32)
 - Gone is the threat of “the day of the Lord.” No longer must they live in terror. Now, Judah can look forward to being a part of the fulfillment of this promise...
 - ❖ Joel 2:28-32--*“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, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. 30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.*
 - This glorious last verse is promising that God is going to call people, and those whom he calls will call upon his name and be saved!



Chapter 3: God judges the nations to avenge his people

- In this section we see a rather unpopular truth. While God has just promised that he will save “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, (Joel 2:32),” he isn’t saving everyone. Those who have made themselves an enemy of his people will find that they have made an enemy of God himself.
 - ❖ Joel 3:2-3--*I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, 3 and have cast lots for my people,.*
 - ❖ Joel 3:20-21--*But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. 21 I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion.*
- In this section we see that all of the terrible wrath that Judah would face if they did not repent, is the very wrath that the nations face...
 - ❖ Joel 3:14-16--*For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. 16 The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake.*
- See how closely God associates himself to his people. in light of this, I cannot help thinking about what this means for people who claim to love Jesus, yet refuse to be faithful to his people (the Church). I wonder how it is possible for such a person to claim to have made a genuine commitment to Jesus and yet have made no such commitment to his people (the Church). If you

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want to know for sure whether or not you really love Jesus, a good test is whether or not you really love what Jesus loves...his Church.

In the book of Joel, Jesus is...

- When we introduced this series by going through Luke 24, we established that we would see Jesus in the Minor Prophets in three ways. We would look at...
 1. New Testament quotes of the Minor Prophets
 2. Typology
 3. Biblical themes of both the Minor Prophets and Jesus
- The first way we will see Jesus in the book of Joel is using the third method, examining Biblical themes of both Joel and Jesus.

1. The one who calls us to radical repentance

Joel's message of repentance

- Joel preached a message of radical repentance. He didn't make it easy. He didn't sugar coat anything. He didn't take excuses.
- Joel's message was urgent. He wanted everyone to repent NOW!
 - ❖ Joel 1:14--*Consecrate a fast; call 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.*
 - ❖ Joel 2:15-16--*Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; 16 gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.*
- Joel's message was based on knowledge of God. He wanted people to turn from their sin because he knew that God is terrifyingly just and wrathful...
 - ❖ Joel 2:11--*The Lord utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it*
- Joel wanted people to turn to God because he knew that God is gracious and merciful...
 - ❖ Joel 2:13...*Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.*
 - ❖ Joel 2:32--*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*
- Joel preached a message of real, radical repentance
 - ❖ Joel 1:13--*Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God!*
 - ❖ Joel 2:12-13--*"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; 13 and rend your hearts and not your garments.*
- In Joel's message of repentance, the people of God are being made ready to hear a very similar message from the very lips of God incarnate.

Jesus's message of repentance

- Jesus's message of repentance is urgent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand!

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- ❖ Matthew 4:17--*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- ❖ Mark 1:14--*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*
- Jesus's message is based on his perfect knowledge of his Father. He calls us to turn from our sin because he knows just how terrifying God's justice and wrath is...
- ❖ Matthew 10:28--*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*
- Jesus calls us to turn to him because the father loves us and has determined to show love and mercy to all who believe in Jesus...
 - ❖ John 3:16-17--*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him"*
 - This particular connection to the prophet Joel is why Paul quotes him in his letter to the Romans...
 - ❖ Romans 10:13--*For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*
- Jesus calls us to real, radical repentance. Consider Luke 18...
 - ❖ Luke 18:18-23--*And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.' " 21 And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 23 But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich"*
- Here Jesus is telling this young ruler that he must do much more than "rend his garments." He must "rend his heart." He had to be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus. This is the kind of repentance Jesus preached. He calls us to do much more than merely change our behavior. We must change our hearts. We must be willing to loose everything for Jesus.
 - ❖ Matthew 10:38-39--*And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"*
- Before going any further, we must remind ourselves that, on our own, we are not capable of the kind of repentance that Jesus calls us to. Paul clearly teaches us that...
 - ❖ Romans 8:7-8--*...the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God"*
 - ❖ 1 Corinthians 1:18--*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing"*
- So the question is how do we do this? How can we repent as Joel and Jesus would have us repent?

2. The one who makes repentance possible

- The only way anyone can truly repent is by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not man who changes his own heart, it is the Holy Spirit of God.

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- ❖ Ezekiel 36:26-27--*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*
- ❖ John 1:12-13--*to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*
- ❖ John 16:8--*And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*
- At this point you are probably thinking, “I thought Pastor Kenny said Jesus made repentance possible, so why is he talking about the Holy spirit?” Because “The Spirit’s coming was conditioned upon the completion of Christ’s work.⁴” We see this in John 7...
 - ❖ John 7:39--*...for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*
- In order to be given the Holy Spirit, we needed Jesus to put on flesh, live a sinless life, die a sinners death, and be resurrected and glorified by his almighty power. It is only then that we are granted Holy Spirit and Jesus himself is the one who sends him to us...
 - ❖ John 15:26--*“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”*
- Joel himself writes of Jesus sending us Holy Spirit when he says that line quoted by Peter in Acts 2...
 - ❖ Joel 2:28-32--*“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, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. 30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*

3. The Righteous Judge

- In the book of Joel, the Lord says...
 - ❖ Joel 3:2--*I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel*
- The question is who is it here that judges? Is it the Father? Is it the Spirit? Doubtless the original hearers would have assumed it to be the Father yet Jesus reveals to us that such passages are speaking of him. He is the righteous judge. Who is the lost world going to face on the “great and very awesome” day of the Lord (Joel 2:11)? Jesus says that it is him...
 - ❖ John 5:22--*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father*

Wrap Up

- Thus when we study the book of Joel. We now know that we should see much more than an ancient record of bugs eating people’s food. We see our savior Jesus calling us to repentance, making our

⁴ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Prophets Speak of Him: Encountering Jesus in the Minor Prophets*, p.33



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repentance possible, and rendering judgment upon all who refuse to repent. May our hearts burn within us.