

JOEL

Joel meaning “Jehovah is God” and is thought to have been a prophet to Judah around the timeframe of Amos and Isaiah (circa 700 BC). Joel must have been written prior to the Babylonian invasion because Philistia was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Considerations About the Era of Joel	
•	Quotes Shared with Amos (1:2) and Isaiah (13:6) <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Joel 3:16 and Joel 3:10
•	“Judah” Called “Israel” (Joel 2:27; 3:16)
•	Invasion Referenced (Joel 3:2)
•	Philistia (Philistines) Referenced (Joel 3:4)
•	Greek Traders Referenced (Joel 3:6)
•	Sabeans (South Arabia) Referenced (Joel 3:8)
•	Edom Referenced (Joel 3:19)

Joel wrote this book after the land had been plagued by locusts who devoured all the plants resulting in famine. Joel used this physical condition (calamity) to reflect the state of their souls (Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6)

Outline of the Book of Joel	
Joel 1:1 - 2:17	The Invasion of Locusts Represents God’s Judgment
Joel 2:18-3:21	God’s Promise to Restore His People

13 Joel 1-3

Read Joel 1:1-4 ... An Invasion of Locusts

- **Just as Daniel showed God’s sovereign control over individuals and national governments, Joel emphasizes that God also is sovereign over nature.**
 - 1:1 The prophecy of Joel begins with the Word of the Lord coming to him instead of Joel witnessing a certain event. Joel is the son of Pethuel (meaning “vision” or “wisdom of God”).
 - The Hebrew name of “Joel” (Jehovah is God”) is similar to the name “Elijah” (“Yah is God”). In the Hebrew Scriptures, the name of God is recorded as YHWH, and “Yah” is a shortened name of “Yahweh.”
 - 1:2-3 Message spanning six generations: 1. your days 2. your ancestors 3. your children 4. their children 5. their children 6. the next generation
 - Several imperative statements followed by rhetorical questions (Isaiah 1:10-11, 28:23-25)
 - 1:4 Locusts (nicknamed “the incarnation of hunger”) represent the destructive power of the enemy (Rev 9:3, 7), and the three categories of locusts (devouring, swarming, young) bring utter destruction (Joel 2:25; Nahum 3:15-17).
 - Symbolically, the message of John the Baptist destroyed these “demolishers” – he consumed locusts (Mk 1:6)

- Locusts have an average life span of several months, and they grow to be nearly 3 inches long. A locust's mouth is comprised of chewing mouth parts that helps them feed on crops; they make a noise by vibrating their hind legs against their forewings.
- Locusts were a part of the covenantal agreement with Israel (Deuteronomy 28:38)



Read Joel 1:5-7 ... Drunkards Were Affected by the Locusts

1:5 Wine is a gift from God to be enjoyed (Psalm 104:15). Sweet wine was alcoholic (Isaiah 49:26).

1:6 The term “invasion” is a military term used for armed assaults.

1:7 Israel is represented by three trees: 1.the vine – BC 2.the fig tree – church age 3.the olive tree – millennium. Here, the vine and fig tree appear white as if dead.

- God claims the fig tree and the vine as His own; agriculture was a gift from Yahweh (Hosea 2:8-9)

Read Joel 1:8-9 ... The Nation of Israel Was Affected by the Locusts

1:8 The bride of Christ (Israel) should grieve because of her lost husband (Lamentations 1:15; Isaiah 23:12).

- In ancient times, there was a status of “virgin widow” where a young lady was betrothed to a man who died prior to the wedding. The most celebrated events were weddings and childbirth, so anything that disrupted these occasions brought immense sorrow.

1:9 Three times the grain and drink offerings are emphasized (Joel 1:13, 2:14). These fellowship offerings were supposed to be times of joy with the Lord.

Read Joel 1:10-12 ... The Agricultural Communities Were Affected by the Locusts

1:10-12 Beyond that, the grain (Feast of Unleavened Bread), new wine (Passover), wheat (Pentecost), barley (Feast of First Fruit), Grapevine (feast of Tabernacles) could not be celebrated, and human joy has dried up.

- Major crops had been destroyed; the wheat for the wealthy and barley for the poor.

Read Joel 1:13-14 ... The Priests Were Affected by the Locusts

1:13 The priests were to embrace the mourning because they would not have God to rescue them from His judgment.

1:14 Corporate repentance was required by the nation

- The Day of Atonement (“Yom Kippur”) was the only national day of fasting for the Jewish nation; however, in time of trouble, national days of fasting could be recognized (Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 3:5-6; 1 Kings 8:33-34; Jeremiah 14)

Read Joel 1:15-18... The Almighty Protector Would Become the Destroyer

1:15 The “Day of the Lord” is not a day of rest, but a time of devastation (Joel 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14). The judgment of the Day of the Lord is recorded in Joel chapter 3.

- Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) referenced Joel’s discussion of the Day of the Lord.
- The “Almighty” refers to “Shaddai” (šadday שַׁדַּי). The Hebrew word for breast is “shad” (שָׁד), and one of the names of God is “El Shaddai” (“big breasted God” or “God Almighty” - omnipotent) because one of the positive attributes is endurance (not simply power) like a nursing mother (powerful in an enduring way). The perseverance of a parent is likened to the omnipotence (El Shaddai) of God.
- The Jewish Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) referred to God as “El Shaddai” as God did not reveal His covenantal name of “Yahweh” until Moses (Exodus 3:14)
- There is a play on words as the Hebrew word for “Shaddai” is šadday, and the Hebrew word for “destruction” is šōd (שׁוֹד). So Israel’s “Divine Protector” was the One Who was bringing the destruction.

Prophets Proclaiming the “Day of the Lord”
Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8
Jeremiah 46:10
Ezekiel 7:10; 13:5; 30:3
Amos 5:18-20
Zephaniah 1:7, 14-18
Obadiah 1:15
Zechariah 14:1

1:16 Famine is a recurring judgment against God’s people who relied on rain for the crops (Deuteronomy 11:10-17)

1:17 An entire community could suffer from a lost crop as there was nothing remaining to barter.

1:18 All creation groans because of the sin of man; even the cattle and sheep would face starvation.

- The cattle and sheep may also allude to the church being called into judgment (e.g., hypocrisy)

Read Joel 1:19-20... The Pattern of the Prayer Given to the People

1:19 There was a lament of a fire or this may allude to the drought over the land.

- Some species of locusts are red in color, so this may also allude to the color of the locusts. When the sun hits the plague of locusts, the sky seems to turn red (Joel 2:3)

1:20 Even the wild animals look to God for provision (Joel 2:22). The imagery of panting reflects a spiritual desire (Psalm 42:1)

Read Joel 2:1-12 ... The Day of the Lord

2:1 The horn was a shofar (a ram’s horn) which was used to communicate alarm and war (Numbers 10:5-9) as well as the gathering of God’s people to a feast (Numbers 10:16)

- The Rabbi’s would teach that the left ram’s horn was to be used.
- The holy mountain references Mt. Moriah as the covenant God communicates to His covenant people.

- The Day of the Lord would be a time of God’s wrath and judgment. As with many prophecies, there would be an immediate short-term fulfillment as well as an end times fulfillment.
- 2:2 God’s judgment would be like a locust plague that would cover the sky and mask the sun. These masses of locusts were equated to an invading army consisting of “*a great and powerful people.*”
- 2:3 The term “fire” might relate to the color of the insects (Joel 1:19-20). Beyond this, the attacking army would leave devastation just as the locusts did. Nothing would escape the judgment of God.
- 2:4 Locusts actually look like horses (Job 39:19-20); Throughout Scripture, horses represent military power (Prov 21:31; Jer 4:29, 8:6; Ps 66:12; Job 39:19-20; Prov 30:27 → Rev 9:7)
- Italians call them “Cavalette” meaning “little horses”
 - Germans call locusts “Heupferde” meaning “hay horses”
- 2:5 Locusts emit a clicking noise by vibrating their hind legs against their forewings.
- A locust’s mouth also makes a different clicking sound when their mandibles chew their food.
- 2:6 The speed and sounds of these masses of invading marauders intimidates the population.
- 2:7 The locusts charge ahead as in battle when they bravely attack a fortress to destroy it.
- 2:8 There was nothing to stop the onslaught of locusts just as no weapon would be effective against the invading army.
- 2:9 The structures and defenses are inconsequential as the invaders take over the land to plunder and destroy.
- 2:10 The earthquake at the end of time (Heb 12:26; Rev 6:12-14; Joel 3:16) as all of creation speaks of His glory (Romans 1:18-21 → Gn 1:14; Ps 19:1, 147:4).
- A spiritual darkness will cloak the world (Joel 2:31; 3:15; Is 8:22, 60:2; Jer 13:16; Amos 5:18, Zeph 1:15-16).
- 2:11 The invaders are viewed as tools of the Lord as He utilized them for the devastation of His people.
- “*He who executes His word is powerful.*” If God’s people would have obeyed His Word, they would have been as powerful as the invading forces.
 - “*For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it?*”

Read Joel 2:12-17 ... A Call to Return to the Lord

- 2:12 God does not simply desire destruction; the Lord truly wants the redemption of His people. (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). God wants to turn His people from their sin back to Himself in total commitment.
- The Old Testament phrase “*return to me*” is a reference to repentance away from sin and towards the Lord.
 - Repentance consists of an initial choice (Mark 1:15), but it is also ongoing and continuous that honors the relationship with the Lord (1 John 1:9).
- 2:13 God desires a sincere, internal change within the heart of man toward Him, and then God would respond with compassion (Ex 34:6-7; Jonah 4:2).
- God desires a humble servant who recognizes His sovereignty instead of a prideful rebel who exalts himself.

- Religious rituals are only valuable after a correct attitude and motive. Religious rituals point to spiritual truths, but they do not replace spiritual truths.

Characteristics of God that Repentance Reveals (Joel 2:13)

God is Gracious (Full of Grace) God is Merciful God is Slow to Anger God Abounds in Steadfast Love God Relents Over Disaster
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- 2:14 If God's people repented, the Lord also might relent of His judgment. If the Lord called away the rapacious locusts, there would be harvest left in which to provide for grain offerings to the Lord.
- 2:15 The Jewish community recognized one day of fasting each year – the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).
- 2:16 When getting right with the Lord, no one was inconsequential. Children, and even nursing infants, were to be present in attendance to come before God.
- No activity or individual should have a higher priority than getting right with God. Even newlyweds should prioritize God above the importance of each other.
- 2:17 The Priests were called to weep at the Laver (the “Word of God”), the only fixture between the Temple and the altar (Mt 23:35). The God of the nation was associated with the success of the nation.

Read Joel 2:18-27 ... The Lord had Mercy on His People

- 2:18 The covenant blessing was an agreement between God and His people upon entry into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 27-28)
- 2:19 The locusts would be destroyed, and God would bring back the success of His people.
- Unlike John 1:10, God will provide grain (“bread of life”), wine (“new life”), and olive oil (“spirit”) as in Joel 2:24
- 2:20 The north came to be known as the direction from which attacks came because of the fertile crescent. Armies in the east (Assyria and Babylon) would follow the Euphrates to its headwaters and then head south into the Promised Land.
- Beyond Assyria, at the end of the Tribulation God will defeat the northern aggressors.
- 2:21-22 All of creation will be joyful instead of fearful (Romans 8:19-21; Mk 16:15, Col 1:23, Rom 10:18, 1 Cor 4:9)
- 2:23 “Early rains” come in the months of October and November. “Early rains” is sometimes translated as the “Teacher of Righteousness.” (Isaiah 30:20; Job 36:22) which is the translation of the Chaldean Targums, of the Zadok fragment of the Dead Sea scrolls as well as the Vulgate.
- 2:24 The Lord speaks of a restoration of blessing following His judgment and the restoration of His people.
- 2:25 The blessing would be commiserating the lost years of the invasion.
- 2:26 The Lord promises the satisfaction of His people. *“Praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.”*

2:27 The “presence” of God is so much more meaningful than the “presents” of God. God promises to be in the midst of His people.

- Joel repeats (Joel 2:26-27) that the shame associated with their sinful ways would not occur again.

Read Joel 2:28-32 ... The Lord Will Pour Out His Spirit

- **From this point in the book of Joel, there is much apocalyptic imagery. In fact, in Hebrew scriptures, this begins the next chapter (Joel 2:28 is marked as Joel 3:1 in the Hebrew Scriptures and Masoretic Text.)**

2:28 Beyond the Jewish community, God would give His Spirit to all mankind (Isaiah 19:19-25).

- This is quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21, 37-39) to represent the similarity in experience (Numbers 1:29, 12:6), but “after this” primarily references post-Tribulation (Hosea 3:5).

2:29 Neither gender nor social status would influence who would receive the Spirit of God.

2:30-32 The Tribulation will drive many to Jesus although His lights in this world will be persecuted and darkened (Ezekiel 32:6-8; Isaiah 50:3; Daniel 12:3).

- “*And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” This verse is quoted in the New Testament in reference to Jesus (Romans 10:13)

Read Joel 3:1-8 ... The Lord Judges the Nations

- **Joel 3:4-8 is written in prose while the remainder is written in poetry.**

3:1 “*Those days*” refer to the time when God pours out His Spirit (Joel 2:28).

- The literal Hebrew states “*I will bring the captivity*” which is translated into “*I will restore the fortunes.*” (Jeremiah 30:18, 32:44)

3:2 This valley of Jehoshaphat (meaning “Jehovah is judge”) will host the nations after the Tribulation’s battle on the same plot of land called the Plain of Megiddo (Rev 19:11-21; Dan 7:10-14).

- This is not to be a gathering of armies, but of nations for judgment to decide participants in the millennial blessing (Zechariah 12:2, 14:2; Zephaniah 3:8; Matthew 25:38-46).
- God will judge all men (Isaiah 66:16; Jeremiah 25:31)
- Although God used Israel’s enemies to exile and scatter her, God would hold those brutal nations accountable.

3:3 God would judge the nations who have engaged with the buying and selling of individuals (slavery).

- The Peshitta states that the young boy was traded for “the price” of a prostitute. In other words, the young boy was going to be used as a prostitute.

Old Testament Scripture Regarding Slave Trade (Joel 3:3)
Genesis 37:36
Obadiah 11
Nahum 3:10

Amos 1:6, 9
Ezekiel 27:13

- 3:4 God states that he had no relationship with Tyre and Sidon although they were the central place of commerce in the world. The Lord would judge Tyre and Sidon shortly.
- 3:5 Israel's neighboring pagan nations would take treasures dedicated to the Lord's service.
- 3:6 God's people from Judah and Jerusalem were sold into slavery of the Greeks (Amos 1:6, 9). The word "Greeks" is translated from "sons of Javan." (Genesis 10:2, 4)
- 3:7 This verse may infer a runaway slave who returns for revenge on those who sold him into slavery.
- 3:8 God would transform the traders of slaves into slaves to be sold to Sabeans (southern Arabian Tribe). (Psalm 72:10; Jeremiah 6:20; Ezekiel 27:22)
- Alexander the Great sold the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon into slavery (332BC)

Read Joel 3:9-16 ... The World Will Know God by His Judgment

- 3:9 This pre-dates verses 1-2 where the armies are preparing for the battle of Armageddon where the Gentile armies join to fight Christ before being destroyed (Rev 16:14-21).
- The nations of the world will amass against God's people in Israel (Isaiah 8:9-10; 17:12-14; Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 12-14; Revelation 16:14-16; 19:17-19)
- 3:10 In the Tribulation, tools will be exchanged for weapons and afterwards in the millennium, the weapons will be exchanged for tools (Isaiah 2:4)
- 3:11 God will bring down his angelic army (Zechariah 14:5; 2 Kings 6:16-17)

Angels Can Function as Military Servants
Deuteronomy 33:2-3
2 Kings 6:16-17
Matthew 16:27
Matthew 25:31
Mark 8:38
2 Thessalonians 1:7
Revelation 19:14

- 3:12 This valley could be one of the three valleys around Jerusalem (Gehenna, Kidron, and Tyropoean), but there is a spiritual symbol towards God being the final judge.
- 3:13 The symbol of the sickle shows how Jesus will deal with the armies (Rev 14:14-20).
- 3:14 Mankind's decisions are past, and the verdicts now belong to the Lord. (Zechariah 14:4)
- 3:15 As God enters creation for judgment, the world convulses. (Joel 2:10, 31; Zechariah 14:6).
- 3:16 Although creation itself trembles at the coming of God in judgment, His people take refuge in Him (Psalm 18:1-2, 27:1, 46:1, 63:3, Jeremiah 17:17)

Read Joel 3:17-21 ... God People Will Know Him As Holy

- 3:17 In the Old Testament, to “know” (Yada) is primarily relational instead of cognitive. God chose Jerusalem for His holy Temple that would ultimately be safe from militaristic invasions. (Isaiah 52:1; Zechariah 9:8; 1 Peter 1:4)
- 3:18 “That day” emphasizes the “Day of the Lord.” The agricultural blessings of Israel are restored. (Joel 1:5) and there will be no more drought (Joel 1:20).
- Shittim (meaning “the acacias”) was the location of Israel’s encampment between the conquest of the Transjordan highlands and the passage of the Jordan. (Numbers 25:1; 33:49; Joshua 2:1; 3:1; Micah 6:5)
 - There will be abundant water. “*A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord.*” (Ezekiel 47:1-12; Psalm 46:4; Zechariah 14:8; Revelation 22:1-2)
- 3:19 Traditional enemies of Israel would disappear
- 3:20 The King will rule from Jerusalem in Judah during the millennium rule.
- 3:21 The Lord will be the avenger of blood during His second coming where He judges for His people.