

Joel

Nothing is known about Joel, the son of Pethuel other than that he is declared to be the author of the book entitled: Joel. The dating of the writing is unable to be determined definitely. Suggested dates range from 900 to 400 BCE. There is no agreement nor are there any generally accepted points of internal evidence to pinpoint a date.

Joel's prophecy deals with a locust invasion which prompts him to realize that God will send judgment, the locust invasion being a warning sign of future disaster. Joel is not a consistent eschatologist. He calls a variety of motifs from Judah's eschatological repertoire and uses these without construction of a systematic synthesis.

Were the locusts real? Such locust plagues were not uncommon. A targum paraphrased the list of four kinds of locusts in terms of people, languages, rulers and kingdoms. A 16th century Greek manuscript has a marginal note describing the locust plague as: Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians and the Greco-Roman empire. Many church fathers interpreted the book allegorically.

Joel is no mere reporter but a prophetic interpreter of current events in terms of their divine implications. The locust plague and the drought are viewed as God's means of chastising a sinful nation (4:7-9). However, his message goes beyond this for he writes about the Day of the Lord as God's intervention, being a great catastrophe for God's enemies.

Zephaniah urged repentance and Joel repeats Zephaniah's call. It has been conjectured, by some scholars in the last half of the 19th century, that there were several writers whose words were compiled to develop the book. This view seems to have lost favor in the last half of the 20th century.

The book is a literary gem, well written, forceful, but the tenderness of Joel makes it even more unique.

The oldest copy in existence today was found in a cave which held some of the Dead Sea scrolls. It is apparently from the early part of the second century BCE. MQ78. Another helpful manuscript dates from the 10th century: the Alexandrian LXX text. This is a copy of a text from the first half of the second century BCE.

The message of Joel has not lost its importance to people of faith over the many centuries since it was first written and its words goad us to reconsider how we live our lives in the 21st century.

The Book of Joel seems to have played a significant part in the molding of the language and conviction of the early church about what Christ had done and would do. In proportion to its length this book has had more impact on the writers of the New Testament than any other Old Testament Book.

Joel

Heading 1:1

1 The message of the Lord that Joel, the son of Pethuel received.

I Judah, locusts and God 1:2-2:17

A Summons to national mourning 1:2-20

I A call to the nation 1:2-12

2 Listen to this! you aged men,
for all the inhabitants of the land must listen!

Has such a thing ever happened in your lifetime,
or in the lifetime of your ancestors?

3 Tell your children about it,
and let your children tell their children,
and their children the next generation.

4 What the shearing (*or, gnawing*) locust left,
the swarming locust has eaten.

What the swarming locust left
the creeping locust has eaten.

What the creeping locust left
the stripping locust has eaten.

5 Wake up, you drunkards, and weep;
wail, all you wine drinkers,
because of the sweet wine,
for it is snatched from your mouth.

6 For a horde has invaded my land;
massive (*or, vast*) and innumerable.
Their teeth are like the teeth of a lion,
and they have a lion's fangs.

7 It has turned my vines into desolation,
and my fig trees to splinters.
(*or, made a stump of my fig trees.*)

They have denuded them, littering the ground;
their branches have turned white (*or, become bleached*).

8 They wail like a virgin dressed in funeral garments,
mourning for her youthful fiancée`.

9 The cereal offerings and libations have ceased,
from the temple of the Lord.

The priests mourn;
God's ministers grieve loudly.

10 The countryside is devastated,
the ground mourns,
for the grain is devastated.

The vineyards have withered;
the oil fails (*or, the yield is feeble*).

11 Be ashamed, you farm workers,
wail, you vintners,
(*or, the vintners wail.*)
because of the wheat and barley;
for the harvest of the fields is ruined.

12 The vines have dried up,
the fig trees droop (*or, wither*)
pomegranate, palm and apricot (*or, apple*) trees,
all the trees of the field have withered;
and joy is turned into sorrow
among the people.

2 *A call to the priests and prayer 1:13-20*

13 Cover yourselves with sackcloth and lament your priests,
wail, you ministers of the altar.
Go and spend the night in sackcloth;
you ministers of my God,
because grain offerings and libations
are no longer offered in the house of your God.

14 Order a sacred feast!
Proclaim a special assembly!
You elders, gather
all the inhabitants of the land
into the house of the Lord your God;
and cry to the Lord.

15 Alas, it is the day!
For the day of the Lord is near,
with the destruction from the Almighty (*or, Shaddai*).

16 Has not the food disappeared
before our very eyes?
So too joy and gladness
from the temple of our God.

17 The seed dies in the ground,
and the granaries are empty.
The barns are dilapidated.
because there has been a crop failure.

18 How the cattle bellow!
The herds of cattle mill about in distress
because they have no pasture.
Even the flocks of sheep waste away (*or, are perishing*).

19 O Lord, I cry to you,
because scorching heat has consumed
the pastures of the wilderness,
and scorching heat has burned up
all the trees of the countryside.
20 Even the wild animals long for you (*or, cry to you*),
because the river beds have dried up,
and scorching heat has consumed
the pastures of the range.

<CHAPTER 2>

B Divine judgment and human repentance 2:1-17

1 *Yahweh's (or, the Lord's) army of locusts 2:1-11*

1 Blow the horn in Zion,
sound the alarm on my sacred mountain!
Let all the population of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near;
2 for there is a dark and gloomy day,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness covering the mountains ---
a vast and powerful horde comes.
There has never been anything to compare with this;
and it will never happen again
in the years ahead.

3 Fire consumes in front of them,
and behind them flames burn.
Before them the land was like the garden of Eden,
but behind them a desolate wasteland
and nothing escapes them.

4 Their appearance is like that of horses,
and they gallop like war horses
(*or, they charge like the cavalry*).

5 Their sound is like clattering of chariots;
they leap to the mountain tops,
like the crackling of a flaming fire,
that is devouring the stubble,
like a powerful horde
arrayed for battle.

6 People tremble in anguish as they advance;
all faces grow pale.

7 They charge like warriors,
they scale the wall like soldiers,
they march in line (*or, straight ahead*).

There is no confusion about their ranks
(or, they do not overlap their tracks).

8 They never jostle one another,
each marches in his own set track *(or, straight ahead).*

They burst though the defenses
and they are not halted.

9 They rush into the city,
they run upon the walls;
they climb up into the house,
entering through the windows like thieves.

10 Before them the earth quakes,
the heavens vibrate;
the sun and moon grow dark;
and the stars stop their bright shining.

11 The Lord utters his voice
at the head of his army,
for his battalion is massive;
those who follow his orders are numberless;
for the great day of the Lord is most terrible!
Who can endure it?

2 *A call to national repentance 2:12-17*

12 The Lord says: "Now is the time,
to wholeheartedly return to me;
by fasting with weeping and lamentation.

13 Do not tear your clothing, but your hearts;
turn back to the Lord your God,
because he is kindly and compassionate,
patient *(or, slow to anger)* and lavish in his constant love.
He relents from imposing punishment.

14 Who knows? He might to relent,
and leave behind him a blessing ---
grain offerings and libations for the Lord, your God?"

15 Blow the horn in Zion;
order a sacred feast.
(or, hold a sacred religious meeting).
Proclaim a solemn gathering.

16 Assemble the people.
Consecrate the congregation.
Assemble the elders.
Bring the children,
even the nursing babies.
Let the bridegroom come out of his room,

and the bride from her canopy.

17 Between the portico and the altar,
let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep
and say, "Take pity on your people, O Lord,
and do not cause your people to be ridiculed (*or, mocked*)
with swear words bandied about by the nations!
Why should they say among the people,
"Where is their God?"

II Divine oracles 2:18-3:21 [H 2:18-4:21]

A Material and spiritual promises 2:18-32 [H:2:18-3:5]

1 Immediate blessing 2:18-27

18 Then the Lord had compassion
(*or, showed passionate concern*) for his land,
and spared his people.
19 The Lord responded to his people,
"Be attentive! I am sending you
grain, wine and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no longer cause (*or, allow*) you
to be despised (*or, ridiculed*) by other nations."
20 "I will remove the northern army (*or, locusts*)
and banish them into a parched and desolate land;
their front rank is to the eastern (*or, Dead*) sea,
and their rear ranks to the western (*or, Mediterranean*) sea;
their stench and foul smell will rise."
(Surely he has done great things.)
21 "Do not fear, countryside,
be glad and rejoice,
because of the Lord's great and mighty deeds!
22 Do not fear the animals (*or, wild beasts*) of the field,
for the pasture land will turn green,
the trees will bear fruit,
the fig trees and vines will give bumper crops.
23 "O children of Zion, be glad,
and rejoice in the Lord, your God;
for he has given the early (*or, autumn*) rain as a token of his kindness.
He has caused abundant rain to fall,
the autumn (*or, early*) and the spring (*or, latter*) rain, in the past.
24 "The threshing floors will be crammed with grain,
the vats will overflow with wine and oil.

25 (I will repay you for the past years
that had been consumed by the swarming locust,
the hopper, the destroyer and the cutter (*or, shearer*);
my great army, which I let loose against you.)
26 You will eat our fill and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has worked wonders for you,
and never again will my people be humiliated.
27 You will know that I am here in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other,
and my people will never again
be despised."

2 *Supernatural blessings* 2:28-32 [*H 3:1-5*]

28 {H3:1} "After all this the time will come when I will pour (*or, spill*) out my spirit on every-one. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy while your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions. 29 {H3:2} In those days I will pour out my spirit upon the male and female slaves 30 {H3:3} And I will set portents (*or, powerful signs, omens*) in the sky and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 {3:4} The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the momentous and terrible day of the Lord comes. 32 {H3:5} And it will happen that all who invoke the name of the Lord will be delivered (*or, escape*); because in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape (*or, find security, deliverance*) as the Lord has promised, and among the remnant (*or, survivors*) will be those whom the Lord calls (*or, when the Lord calls*)."

<CHAPTER 3 [*H 4*]

B The judgment of nations 3 [*H 4*] 1-21

1 *Charges and summonses to judgment* 3 [*H 4*] 1-12

1 "In those days (*or, the day of the Lord*) and at that time I will reverse (*or, restore*) the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem. 2 I will gather all the nations and bring them down to judgment valley (*or, the valley of Jehoshaphat*) and I will put them on trial there on behalf of my people and my heritage (*or, possession*) Israel, since they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land. 3 and have cast lots for my people, and have bartered for the price of a prostitute, and have bartered (*or, sold*) girls for wine, which they drank.

4 "What did you intend to do to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and the districts of Philistia? Were you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily pay you back for the deeds you have done. 5 For you have taken my silver and my gold and have carried my rich treasures into your temples (*or, palaces*). 6 You have sold the young people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks (*or, Ionians*), thus removing them from their own homeland. 7 I will soon enable them to leave the place to which you have sold them, and you will be paid back for your deeds. 8 I will sell your sons and daughters into the possession of the Judeans and they will sell them to the Sabeans., a distant nation."

The Lord has spoken!

9 Proclaim (*or, call out, cry out*) this among the nations;
Muster for war,
arouse the mighty warriors.

Let all the troops advance.

Let them be ready to attack.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords,
and your pruning hooks into spears;
let the weakling say, 'I am a brave warrior.'

11 Come quickly!

All you surrounding nations,
gather yourselves there.

(Send down your warriors, O Lord.)

12 Let the nations rouse (*or, be alerted*),
and advance to judgment valley (*or, the valley of Jehoshaphat*).

for there I will sit in judgment
over all the surrounding nations.

2 *The nation's fate and Judah's fortune* 3 [H 4] 13-21

13 Wield the sickle,
for the crop is ripe.

Climb in and tread the grapes,
for the wine press is full.

The vats are overflowing,
for their wickedness is great.

14 Crowd after crowd ---
fill verdict valley (*or, the valley of decision*);

for the day of the Lord has drawn near
in verdict valley (*or, the valley of decision*).

15 The sun and moon are darkened
and the stars stop shining.

16 The Lord roars from Zion,
and shouts loudly from Jerusalem,
so that the heavens and earth tremble.

But the Lord is a shelter to his people,
a strong refuge (*or, fortress*) to the Israelites.

17 "Thus you will know that I am the Lord your God,
who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain
and Jerusalem will be holy (*or, made sacred*),
never having aliens (*or, strangers*) pass through it again.

18 "On that day it will happen (*or, take place*)
that the mountains will flow with sweet wine,
and the hills will run with flowing milk,
and all the river beds (*or, water courses*) of Judah
will flow with water;
and a spring will issue from the Lord's temple
and water the acacia valley (*or, the valley of Shittim*).

19 "Egypt will become a desolation;
Edom will become a barren steppe,
because of the outrageous treatment of the people of Judah
for in their land innocent blood has been shed.

20 But Judah will never lack inhabitants,
nor will Jerusalem for generations to come.

21 I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty;
just as surely as the Lord dwells in Zion!"