

The Book of JOEL

The Day of the LORD is at Hand

Key Verse: Joel 2:12,13**I. Introduction – Take note of:**

- A. _____ fulfilment of the prophecies - at the First Coming as well as the Second Coming.
- B. The absence of the _____ in the prophecies.
- C. An almost totally _____ view of the near future.
- D. The long-term objectives of God through history: not just the short-term judgements and condemnations. These include:
 - 1. _____ of Israel
 - 2. The placement of _____ forever as king in Israel
 - 3. The Messiah as King of Kings in the New Jerusalem
 - 4. The restoration of the earth

II. Introduction to the Book of Joel

- A. **Author:** Joel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- B. **Date of writing:** 800-750 B.C.
- C. **Theme:** The coming judgement upon Judah, then upon the Gentiles at Armageddon, and finally the restoration of Israel.
- D. **The significance of the name 'Joel':**

- 1. Jo-El Means " _____ ", or "The LORD, He is God".
- 2. Represents a testimony to this fact. Joel is written to prove that Jehovah is God

NOTE: The Bible places great significance upon the meaning of names. Examples include: Saul's name being changed to Paul; Simon being changed to Peter; the name Moses meaning "drawn out" to represent the children of Israel being drawn out of Egypt; as well as the names of ALL the prophets.

E. Joel's audience (3 fold):

- 1. The tribe of Judah at the time of writing, as well as the people of Jerusalem (3:1)
 - 2. All New Testament saints since it is part of the eternal Scriptures
 - 3. The world during the tribulation.
- F. Joel's message is on the occasion of a very severe plague of locusts and terrible drought. He gives the moral and spiritual application. He is quoted by Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Nabu, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and by some of the Psalmists.
 - G. A plague of locusts of unprecedented severity has come upon the Land - a real plague of locusts. The accuracy of his description, down to details, is confirmed by eyewitness accounts both ancient and modern. It is not an allegorical description of an invading army or of the enemies of Israel, as has been done by some.
 - H. Joel, gives more than a surface description of the plague... He interprets it in depth, as a meaningful act of the God of judgment and salvation. He bids the people look beneath the surface of devastation and despair and see in the plague, most of all an indication of the coming great Day of the Lord, which bids them cry to the Lord.
 - I. Second, by using the term "the northerner" for the locusts (2:20) he begs his people to see in them an approaching last judgmental visitation, which calls men return to the Lord and find deliverance in Him. (2:1-27)

- J. Third, Joel's prophetic vision, pierces into the future, and he gives a full-scale depiction of the coming day of the Lord (2:28-3:21)

III. Lesson - "The Day of The LORD Is At Hand"

A. The Spiritual Condition of Judah (1:1-20)

1. Never been so bad before, never will be as bad (1:1-3)
2. Four-fold pestilence was on its way:
 - a. Palmerworm A voracious kind of young grasshopper that shreds everything in its path
 - b. Locust It multiplies so rapidly that it eats everything in its path
 - c. Cankerworm A worm that licks and sucks up everything in its path
 - d. Caterpillar A young larva of a butterfly that devours everything in its path
 - e. Everything about Judah will be destroyed, wave by wave
 - f. Just like everything was destroyed step-by-step by the plagues of Egypt
 - 1) Loss of the fish industry (Ex 7:14-25)
 - 2) Human health hazards of frogs, lice and flies (Ex 8)
 - 3) Most cattle killed-off by a murrain (Ex 9)
 - 4) Human health hazards of boils (Ex 9)
 - 5) Most crops destroyed by fire mixed with hail (Ex 9)
 - 6) Remaining crops destroyed by locust (Ex 10)
 - 7) All human hope taken away by darkness (Ex 10)
 - 8) Strength to fight taken away by the loss of the firstborn (Ex 12)

PRINCIPLE: God's judgements are not worth getting involved with. The message of the Gospel is basically the same as that of these Old Testament prophets: "Flee from the wrath to come", by coming to One who can "hide you till the storm passes by".

3. Judah is in a _____ state (1:5)
4. The Babylonian Army was coming (1:6,7)
5. It's time to weep and lament (1:8-13)
 - a. Like a virgin bridesmaid who loses her husband just before the day of her wedding
 - b. No more sacrifices
 - c. Farms ruined
 - d. The harvest is spoiled
 - e. Everybody should be weeping: priests, the Lord's ministers, husbandmen (farmers), everyone (sons of men)
6. It's time to call for fasting and prayer for the nation (1:14-20)
 - a. Gather everyone, from the elders and leaders down
 - b. Gather at the House of the Lord
 - c. Cry aloud and pray
 - d. Because the great DAY OF THE LORD is at hand – near! The first time this appears
 - 1) It describes the coming battle of Armageddon (Joel 3:14)
 - 2) The destruction that would be caused by the Babylonian army was just a picture, a taste of the destruction by the coming army of heaven!
 - e. Fasting and prayer would have helped – would have postponed the disasters. But no one responded, and so judgment fell!

B. The Call To Sound The Alarm: The Day of the LORD is "At Hand" (2:1-11)

1. The Day of the LORD (central theme of the Minor Prophets)
 - a. Isa 13:6-13
 - b. 1 Thes 5:1-3
 - c. 2 Pet 3:10
 - d. Amos 5:18-20
 - e. Obediah 15
 - f. Zeph 1:7-18; 2:2-3
 - g. Zech 14:1-21
 - h. Mal 4:1-4

2. The conditions as prophesied by Joel:
 - a. Darkness (thick darkness - it can be _____; Ex 10:21,22)
 - b. Gloominess
 - c. Clouds (Matt 24:30)
 - d. An army of a multitude of people riding upon horses, spread upon the mountains like the morning like, called "his army" (Rev 19:11-17)
 - e. Fire from that army that devours both in front of them, and behind (2 Thes 1:6-10)
 - f. Immortal warriors (1 Cor 15:52,53; Phil 3:21)
 - 1) Riding on horses
 - 2) Running
 - 3) Flying - Leaping from mountain top to mountain top
 - 4) A strong people – army – well organized in battle array
 - 5) Striking fear into everyone who sees them
 - 6) Burning everyone they pass by
 - 7) Climbing walls
 - 8) Never breaking rank – like the British military tactics up until the 1900's
 - 9) No friendly-fire – never a mistake killing each other
 - 10) Never wounded when cut
 - 11) Able to pass throughout the cities of the enemy without hindrance
 - g. Earthquakes (Rev 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18)
 - h. Heaven itself _____ – this is a wild thought (Isa 13:13; Hag 2:6) – things in heaven are going to be moved out of place! Stars? Probably planets. Things you can see with the naked eye!
 - i. Sun, moon, and stars _____ (Rev 8:12)
 - 1) QUESTION: Technically, when does all the above occur?
 - 2) Has it ever happened yet in the past?

C. The Call To _____ (2:12-27) - A sure cure for judgement!

1. Joel says, "There's still a chance for us, but it's up to us!" Same with Nineveh
2. The conditions for repentance (2:12-17)
 - a. Turn to the LORD (meaning of repentance) – turn to another mind
 - b. Rend (break) your heart (inward), not clothes (outward)
 - c. Yield - Let God do what He thinks is right (2:14)
 - d. Call a fast for all people (Cf Jonah 3:5-10) at a solemn assembly (2:15,16)
 - e. Weep and pray for deliverance (2:17)

3. The promised effect (2:18-27) - The LORD will:
 - a. Be jealous once again for His land (2:18)
 - b. Pity His people (2:18)
 - c. Answer prayers again (2:19)
 - d. Bountifully bless His people once again (2:19)
 - e. Drive away the enemy, and judge him (2:20)
 - f. Bring back the rain (2:23; Cf Elijah)
 - g. Restore everything back to the way that it was before the sin came (2:24-26; Cf Job 42)
 - h. Be "in the midst" of His people (2:27; Cf the name 'Emanuel')

APPLICATION: When sin has run its course in a persons life, judgement can only follow (i.e., homosexual & promiscuous living is followed by AIDS). God has worked out a system however where man can get his life back in order before the judgement takes effect. All revivals occurred just prior to great catastrophes: England in 1737 under Whitefield, America under Wesley in 1750s, Billy Sunday in 1920s.

D. The Culmination: The Pouring Out of the _____ (2:28-32)

1. Note the words: "it shall come to pass _____..."
 - a. After what?
 - b. After Israel getting broken and right with God
2. What circumstances surround this "outpouring?"
 - a. God pours out His Spirit upon _____ flesh (2:28,29)
 - 1) Israel's sons and daughters will prophesy (2:28)
 - 2) Old men shall dream dreams
 - 3) Young men shall see visions
 - 4) Servants, handmaids – even slaves – will receive the Holy Spirit
 - b. _____ will be on earth and in the heavens (2:30-32):
 - 1) Blood on earth = warfare
 - 2) Fire on earth = warfare
 - 3) Pillars of smoke (Cf Ex 14:19; 33:9)
 - 4) Sun is darkened
 - 5) Moon is turned into blood – hard to take literally.
 - a) Maybe there will be people living on the moon that will be killed
 - b) Maybe moon dust will turn into blood just as the water of the river Nile turned to blood
 - c. All before the culmination, apex, climax of the _____ – which is the Second Coming of the Messiah
3. It is at this time that anyone can just “call on the name of the Lord” and be delivered (Rom 10:13; Acts 2:21)
4. Concerning "Pentecost" (Acts 2:14-21)
 - a. Only partial fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy
 - b. Peter believed the fact that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was just the beginning, and that it would culminate in Jesus returning right then in Acts. But Peter was wrong.

E. The Call For The Gentiles to The Battle of Armageddon (3:1-21)

NOTE: The theme moves from judgement upon God's people (where it must first begin [1 Pet 4:17]), to the Gentiles.

1. The gathering of _____ nations (Zeph 3:8; Zech 14:1-4; Math 25:31)
2. The valley of Jehosaphat ("Jehovah hath judged") - _____
3. Call to arms (3:9-14) – you gentiles had better be ready for war
4. The valley of _____ (a decisive battle indeed!)
5. The appearance of the LORD and His army (3:16)
6. After, and ONLY after the battle will Israel will be restored to a perfect state (3:17-21).
This then places these prophecies where in time?

IV. Conclusion

- A. **Brief Summary:** A terrible locusts plague is followed by a severe famine throughout the land. Joel uses these happenings as the catalyst to send words of warning to Judah that unless the people repent quickly and completely, the enemy armies of Babylon will come next and devour the land as did the natural elements. Joel appeals to all the people and the priests of the land to fast and humble themselves as they seek God's forgiveness. If they will but respond, there will be renewed material and spiritual blessings for the nation. But something much worse than their current calamity was coming - the Day of the Lord. At that time, the dreaded locust will seem as gnats in comparison, as all nations on that day, will receive their judgment.
- B. **Practical Application:** Without repentance, judgment will be harsh, thorough and certain. Our trust should not be in our possessions but in the Lord our God. God at times may use nature, sorrow or other common occurrences to draw us closer to Him. Oftentimes, troubles are warnings of worse times coming, and need to be heeded, so that we repent and get right instead of get harder!