

“Introduction To The Book Of Joel”

Joel 1:1-20

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Teaching Aim: To realize God sometimes reveals His anger at the sin of a nation by causing or allowing a natural disaster to come. To recognize the many opportunities God gives to people to repent and get right with Him. To understand when a nation gets right with God, forgiveness, reconciliation and the blessings of God soon follow.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Background to the Book of Joel

1. What was the historical setting behind the book of Joel? (See **vs. 4**) The Book of Joel falls among the group of prophetic books known as the “*minor prophets*.” Why are the “*minor prophets*” called minor while prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are known as the “*major prophets*?” Does the size of the book really have anything to do with the value of the book? Are the books of the minor prophets any less Scripture than the books of the major prophets?

2. Nobody knows for sure when the Book of Joel was written. Many believe “*Joel*” belongs with the pre-exilic (or *pre-Babylonian captivity 586 B.C.*) books. Of these, most people believe Joel was written during the reign of King Joash (835-796 B.C.) Others believe the book belongs with the post-exilic books around the time of Malachi (400 B.C.). The date of the Book of Joel isn’t as important as the timeless message that it shares – “*It’s not too late for the nation to repent and get right with God!*” We see a pattern for God’s people laid out in the Book of Joel: 1) Punishment for sin; 2) National repentance; 3) God judges the wicked nations; 4) God restores and blesses His people. What can we learn as Americans today from this pattern?

Part II: A locust invasion of historic proportions (Joel 1:1-12)

1. The name “*Joel*” means “*the LORD (or Yahweh) is God*”. What little information can we learn from **verse 1** about Joel’s background and the time of the writing?

2. “*The elders*” are the first group of people Joel refers to. Who are the elders that Joel is speaking to (**vs. 2**)? What is Joel asking these elders to be witnesses of? The locust infestation (*which is the background for this book*) is a judgment from God on the nation for its sin. So significant was this event, that the Israelites were instructed to do something in **verse 3**. What was it? Have they?

3. What four kinds of locusts are described in **verse 4**? Do you think the locust described in **verse 4** are literal locusts or invading foreign armies? Why? What can we learn about the level of destruction from **verse 4**? Four groups of people are singled out to mourn the destruction of the crops in **chapter 1**, who are they? (See **vv. 2,5,11,13**) Do you believe that God still speaks to us today through natural disasters? If so, what should we learn when one occurs?

4. “*The drunkards*” are the second group of people Joel refers to. Drunkenness in **verse 5** is the only specific sin mentioned in this chapter. Are drunk people alert to what is happening around them? Apparently, the people had become numb to their sin and to the coming judgment. Do you think this is similar to what is happening among many in America today? The United States is quickly turning its back on the God of the Bible and is actually moving toward being anti-God in many areas. What can we expect as a nation if we continue on this course?

5. **Verses 6 & 7** seem to shift from a literal invasion of locusts to future military invasions of the Promised Land. What can we learn about the level of destruction from these invasions in **verses 6 & 7**? Could we face a similar fate in the United States if our country does not repent? What are some ways that God’s judgment might play out today?

6. Why would a virgin preparing for her wedding remove her bridal clothes and change into “*sackcloth*”? (See Dictionary) According to **verses 6 & 7**, what happened to the virgin’s groom?

7. So severe would the locust invasion and future military invasions be that the staples of bread and wine would be destroyed (**vv. 9 & 10**). Not only would the food supply be gone, but even Israel's worship would be affected. What are some ways that worship is being affected today by the sin of our nation?

8. The third group of people Joel refers to are the "*farmers*" (**vs. 11**)? All of their plans and the hard work they thought would lead to life, joy and happiness had been destroyed in a moment; they had nothing left. Many people today think they can work their way to salvation. Can they? How does this illustration relate to the gospel message? (See **Eph. 2:8-9**)

9. What can we learn about the intensity of the drought, the size of the locust invasion, and the degree of destruction from **verse 12**? What does the destruction of the various kinds of trees tell us? How will this level of destruction affect the people? Have you ever gone through a spiritual drought in your own life? What was the cause? How did you get out of it?

Part III: A call to mourn and repent (Joel 1:13-20)

1. How did Joel (*under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*) urge "*the priests*" (the fourth group of people) to react in this or any other crisis (**vs. 13**)? (See **2 Cor. 13:5-6**) Is it ever too late to repent? The spiritual leaders are commanded to repent first (**vs. 13**), then what are they told to do (**vs. 14**)? What is the purpose of a "*fast*"? (See **Isa. 58:1-9**) What was a "*sacred assembly*" and why were they held? (See **Num. 10:1-3; 29:35-38; Neh. 8:18**) What were the people to do according to the last part of **verse 14**? (See **1 Thess. 5:15-18**) Should we wait for a crisis before we start praying to God or should we be praying all the time? How would you rate your prayer life on a scale of 1-10?

2. What can we learn about "*The Day of the LORD*" from **verse 15**? Describe the different ways "*The Day of the LORD*" is used in Scripture. (See Bible Dictionary) How was the destruction of the Day of the LORD made manifest during the time of the prophet Joel (**vv. 16-17**)?

3. According to **verse 18**, how far reaching was the sin of the people? (See **Rom. 8:20-22**) Do our personal sins still affect other people today? If so how? According to **Rom. 8:20-22**, what are some ways that creation has been affected by sin?
4. In **verse 19** the prophet Joel begins to intercede on behalf of the nation of Israel in prayer. Fire is often used in the Scriptures to describe God's judgment. What imagery did Joel present in **verses 19 and 20**? How complete was this judgment? What are some ways that unconfessed sin can destroy lives even today?
5. Can judgment be averted according to **Joel 2:12-14**? If so, how? What will it take for Christians to repent, get on their knees, and pray for our nation and the world today? Will you? Believe it or not, there is hope if we do!

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- The date of the Book of Joel is not as important as the timeless message – *"It's not too late for the nation to repent and get right with God!"*
- Joel is known as *"The prophet of Pentecost"*, and sometimes also called *"the John the Baptist"* of the Old Testament.
- Sometimes God reveals His anger against our sin through calamity and natural disasters.
- Sin affects everybody and everything, it also affects our ability as believers to worship.
- We are not saved by our works, but by grace through faith in the finished works of Christ alone.
- When we realize we have sinned, we should repent immediately and go to God in prayer asking for His forgiveness. (See **1 John 1:9**)