

Joel

1. Who is Joel?

We have so little personal information about Joel (no more than his father's name) that we can only guess at how he lived, where he worked and what lay behind his prophetic utterances. There are no historical notes about his ministry and no record of his call or commission (Hubbard 28).

(Joel 1:1)

[1:1] The word of the LORD that came to **Joel, the son of Pethuel**:

2. What was the historical context of Joel's ministry?

There is some disagreement regarding when the book of Joel was written, ranging all the way from an early pre-exilic date (~800 BC) to a late post-exilic date (400-180 BC). But most scholars hold to a middle date, shortly after the exile (~500 BC) for a few reasons.

3. What are the themes in Joel?

(1) Judgment:

Joel introduces the Lord's judgment in the form of a locust infestation, drought, and the coming of a great army. He describes the devastation that has come upon Judah. This attack is so powerful in its scope that it must in some way be connected with the Day of the Lord.

(Joel 2:1-5)

[2:1] Blow a trumpet in Zion;
 sound an alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,
[2] a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains
 a great and powerful people;
their like has never been before,
 nor will be again after them
 through the years of all generations.

[3] Fire devours before them,
and behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them,
but behind them a desolate wilderness,
and nothing escapes them.
[4] Their appearance is like the appearance of horses,
and like war horses they run.
[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.

(2) Repentance:

Though judgment is present, it is not too late to repent. This turning is not a token gesture or an act of empty ritual; it must be wholehearted. Outward manifestations there will be – fasting, weeping, and mourning. But they must be symbols of a broken heart, a will fully yielded to God's demands.

(Joel 2:12-16)

[12] “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.”
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.
[14] Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD your God?
[15] 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.

(Deuteronomy 24:5)

[5] “When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken.

(3) Hope:

God, in his grace, hears the cries of his people and moves to restore and bless them.

(Joel 2:24-29)

[24] “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.

[27] You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

[28] “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.