Joel 1

The day of the Lord is near

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, *pages 125-142)*

Look

Verse 1 — We know little about the prophet Joel, whose name means "Jehovah is God," other than that he is the son of Pethuel. He does not date his book by referring to the kings who ruled during his ministry, so there is considerable debate about when he worked. The fact that no king is mentioned *may* suggest that Joel served at the time of a king like Joash, who became king at the age of seven (2 Chronicles 24:1). Due to his youth, Joash spent the first years of his reign under the guidance of Jehoiada, a priest. If this is the case, Joel would be one of the earliest of the prophets working in Judah, about 830 B.C.

Verse 15 — *"The day of the LORD"*—This is a phrase that refers to a time when the Lord—the compassionate, gracious, just, and holy God—intervenes to carry out his will, either in judgment or in redemption. The day of the Lord is the great day of judgment for all people, but it also includes every other act and intervention of God prior to the Last Day. Thus in Scripture, the establishment of the New Testament church (Isaiah 2), the destruction of Babylon (Isaiah 13), and the plague of locusts in Joel are all "days of the LORD," pointing to judgment day.

Discuss

1. Though we know little about Joel, what important fact do we learn in verse 1?

2. What event served as the occasion for the writing of the book of Joel? (verses 4,17,18)

3. What different groups of people does Joel address in chapter 1? (verses 5,8,11,13) Which of God's blessings did the locust plague take away from them?

4. What does Joel call on the people of Judah to do in response to the plague? (verse 14)

5. How does the prophet show that he practices what he preaches? (verses 19,20)

Apply

6. Some people credit the rise and fall of nations to the influence of powerful personalities and explain famines and drought in terms of global climate changes, but Joel has a different perspective. How does he teach us to view such events?

Joel proclaimed a horde of locusts and a drought to be harbingers of the day of the Lord.

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Joel 2:1-17

Who can endure the day of the Lord?

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, *pages 142-154)*

Look

The plague of locusts in Joel's day was tied together with another great day of the Lord (2:1). The next great day of the Lord was his judgment on the house of Israel for its ongoing sins, particularly idolatry. Such a judgment was foretold by all the prophets who spoke to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. If Joel was an early prophet, his words would probably apply in general to the destruction God had decreed on both houses of Israel.

Discuss

1. The plague of locusts in chapter 1 is used as the backdrop for the plague of a foreign invasion in chapter 2. Read 2:1-11. How does the Assyrian army, which captured the Northern Kingdom and occupied Samaria, compare to a locust invasion?
   - Its approach (verses 1,2,10)
   - Its effect on the land (verse 3)
   - Its appearance (verses 4,5)
   - Its effect on the people (verse 6)
   - Its power and discipline (verses 7-9)
   - Its source of power (verse 11)
2. In verse 11, Joel asks who can endure the day of the Lord. The answer is that no one can survive it. So what does Joel encourage the people to do in verses 12 and 13 and in verses 15-17?
3. In verse 14, the Lord's blessing is described as "grain offerings . . . for the LORD your God." Why is that such a wonderful blessing?
4. On what basis do the priests plead for God to have mercy? (verse 17)

Apply

5. How does Joel's call for torn hearts and not just torn garments apply to our worship?

The locust plague pictured a greater plague—a foreign invasion. If God's people would turn from their sins, the Lord might relent.

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Joel 2:18-32

The coming of the day of the Lord

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, *pages 155-164)*

Look

We move from the old covenant to the new, from blessings conditioned on Israel's obedience to blessings conditioned only on God's love and compassion. Because of his promises to Adam and Eve, God will send a Savior. Because of God's promises to Abraham, he will have mercy on his people. Because John the Baptist preached about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—which led the people of Jesus' day to repentance and faith—God would bestow his unconditional blessings on Israel.

Verse 30 *"I will show wonders."*—The New Testament period is greatly condensed by Joel. What we see as being separated by two thousand years (Jesus' suffering and death and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit followed by the darkening of the sun and moon shortly before the end), Joel sees as happening in quick succession. This is how the prophets saw the last days.

Discuss

1. At this point, Joel's prophecy becomes unconditional. The Lord would be jealous of his honor and uphold it forever. He would take pity on his people. If these words were conditioned on the Israelites' service to God under the law, or even on their repentance, God would never have spoken the unconditional words he spoke at the end of verses 19, 26, and 27. Explain.

2. What blessings would Israel enjoy into eternity?
   - verse 19
   - verse 20
   - verses 21-24
   - verses 25,26

3. What great blessing would the Lord pour out on all people after Jesus suffered and died, established his kingdom, and ascended into heaven? (verses 28,29) (See Acts 2:16-21.)

4. Whom does Joel credit for the salvation of the "survivors"? (verse 32)

Apply

5. What blessings do you experience as part of the new Jerusalem?

The Lord would bless his people in many ways, including giving them the Holy Spirit.

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Joel 3

The day of the Lord

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, *pages 164-177)*

Look

Much of this chapter is referred to in the book of Revelation. This chapter clearly refers to the end, when Satan will launch a last-ditch effort to destroy God's people.

Verse 1 *"I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem."* This would happen in Christ, who set aside the law, gave us the gospel, and established a church that is pure and free from stains or blemishes through faith in him.

Verse 11 *"Bring down your warriors, O LORD!"* As Jesus taught us to pray "your kingdom come," so Joel prays for God to avenge his people.

Discuss

1. In the last days, the Lord will create a new Jerusalem made up of all who come to faith in the Savior. At that time he will punish once and for all the people of the world who took a stand against God's people. What does *Jehoshaphat* mean? (See the NIV footnote for verse 2.) What does "the Valley of Jehoshaphat" represent?

2. How does the Lord symbolize his judgment on the nations in verses 4-8?

3. Read Revelation 20:7-9. It speaks of a time at the end of the present era when Satan would deceive the nations and lead them to war against the new Jerusalem. Compare this to Joel 3:9-16.

4. After God's enemies are destroyed, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Review how this is described in Revelation 21:22–22:5.

Apply

5. Some say that a loving God could never punish anyone with eternal death in hell. How do verses 1-7 show that it is because God is love that he will punish his enemies?

The day of the Lord will mean destruction for the wicked and deliverance for believers.

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