

Joel

Authorship: Nothing is *significantly* known about Joel except his father's name (1:1) and his familiarity with Jerusalem. Although there are numerous Joels in the Old Testament, the prophet bearing his name is known only from this book. He only identified himself as "the son of Pethuel" and did not name his hometown or the kings of his ministry.

Date: Determining the date of this book is difficult because Joel names no Israelite kings. It is apparent, however, that he was an early prophet:
(1) Joel's order of placement within the 12 minor prophets would suggest a date before 800 B.C., since these books are in rough chronological order;
(2) There are thematic similarities with other prophets of this era such as Amos and Isaiah.

Location: Joel ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah, as seen by his reference to that area: (1) The "Temple of the LORD" (1:9, 14); (2) "Zion" (a hill in Jerusalem, mentioned seven times); (3) Several references to Judah and Jerusalem.

Background: Swarms of locusts were a constant threat to farmers of the ancient Near East. Perhaps *it was* during the reign of Joash (835-796 B.C.), *that* a terrible plague of locusts struck Judah. The prophet Joel called his people to repentance and pleaded with God to end the plague. Yet he saw in the disaster a foreshadowing of a far greater future plague: God's final judgment on sin in the Great Tribulation. Looking still farther into the future, he also saw the blessings of the Millennium. Assuming he wrote during Joash's reign, Joel was among the earliest of the writing prophets.

Recipients: The people of Judah living in Jerusalem. The first hearers were people and priests living in Judah, perhaps about 800 B.C. or 500 B.C.

Purpose: To warn of God's impending judgment on Israel while showing the balance between justice and his love:

- (1) God's love does not mean he can forget sin. Sin must be punished;
- (2) On the other hand, God's justice does not mean that he desires to completely end his relationship with his wife (Israel). God constantly tries to draw Israel back to himself. Even in the wake of judgment he will preserve a remnant.

Outline:

- I. **The Day of the Locust (1:1-14)**
 - A. **Divine Displeasure Expressed (1:1-5)**
 1. **A Word for the Prophet (1:1)**
 2. **A Word for the People (1:2-5)**
 - a. **The Descendants (1:2-4)**
 - b. **The Drunkards (1:5)**
 - B. **Divine Displeasure Expands (1:6-14)**
 1. **Desecration (1:6-7)**
 2. **Desolation (1:8-12)**
 3. **Desperation (1:13-14)**
- II. **The Day of the LORD (1:15-3:21)**
 - A. **The Day of Assyria (1:15-20)**
 1. **A Day of Destruction (1:15-20)**
 2. **A Day of Darkness (2:1-10)**
 3. **A Day of Deliverance (2:11-32)**
 - a. **A Call for Repentance (2:11-19)**
 - b. **A Call for Rejoicing (2:20-27)**
 - c. **A Call for Revival (2:28-32)**
 - B. **The Day of Antichrist (3:1-16)**
 1. **The Gathering of the Hebrew People (3:1)**
 2. **The Gathering of the Heathen Peoples (3:2-16)**
 - a. **A Gathering of the Wicked (3:2-8)**
 - b. **A Gathering of the Warmongers (3:9-13)**
 - c. **A Gathering of the World (3:14-16)**
 - C. **The Day of Anticipation (3:17-21)**
 1. **A Wonderful Coming (3:17-18)**
 2. **A Woeful Contrast (3:19)**
 3. **A Welcome Conclusion (3:20-21)**

Meaning of Name

Joel, an otherwise unknown Israelite prophet to Judah, has given his name to this book as its composer. His name means:
"The LORD is God" in Hebrew.

Key Verse

"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" (Joel 2:25 ESV).

Key Term: "Locusts"

Joel described a locust swarm that devoured the crops of Judah. He understood them to be an army sent by God to judge His people for their sins.

Sources:

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