

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #223

THE BOOK OF JOEL: CHAPTER ONE

1. The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

Names are extremely important in the Bible. Joel's name means *one to whom Jehovah is God* or, in other words, *worshiper of Jehovah*. Other than this first verse, we know nothing about Joel. He is sometimes referred to as "The Anonymous Prophet." Many believe that he was the first of the "writing" prophets. We do know that he was the son of Pethuel or Bethuel as some translations translate it. This name Pethuel means *vision of God* and comes from a Hebrew word that means *to open the eyes*. We also know nothing about Pethuel except that he was Joel's father. Joel must have written this in the 9th or 8th Century BC. Because he speaks repeatedly of Zion, Judah and Jerusalem, scholars believe his home was in Jerusalem.

Dr. A.B. Simpson says of Joel, "*Amos begins his longer message with a direct quotation from Joel, as a sort of text for his whole book. Isaiah expands the thoughts which Joel uttered into the larger and loftier message of his pen. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, quotes the prophecy of Joel as the very foundation of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, which had occurred and which was to continue through the whole New Testament age. And even the great Apocalypse of John is but a larger unfolding of the promise of the Lord's coming which Joel gave in brief outline.*"

The theme of this book is "the Day of the Lord." This is a period at the end of the age or last days when the Lord openly intervenes in the affairs of men. It is an apocalyptic term (i.e., having to do with the end time events on the earth) and also a prophetic term and is thought to be the Lord's outpouring of His wrath because of the sins of mankind (see Psalm 2) and will be characterized by catastrophic weather and earthly calamities such as plagues, famines, hurricanes, pestilence, drought, and manmade disasters, etc. (see Isaiah 2:13, Isaiah 13:6-9, Amos 5:18-20, Jeremiah 46:10-11, 1st Corinthians 5:5, 1st Thessalonians 5:2, 2nd Peter 3:8-10).

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. (Joel 1:15)

But of the time and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye brethren are not in darkness that the day should overtake you as a thief. (1st Thessalonians 5:2-4)

- 2. Listen to this, you old men! Give ear all you inhabitants of the land! Has this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?**
- 3. Tell your children about it and your children their children, and their children another generation.**

Joel first addresses the elders, but continues to include everyone. What he is about to say is so important that future generations need to know about what he is going to tell them. He is about to describe a calamity of such proportions that it is the worst the people have ever seen. He wants the people to remember this tragedy so that they will fear God and know that He severely punishes those who walk in disobedience.

- 4. The locust has eaten what the palmer worm has left and that which the locust has left the canker worm has eaten and that which the canker worm has left the caterpillar has eaten.**
- 5. Wake up, you drunkards! Weep and howl, all you drinkers of wine! Because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.**

These are actually four stages of the same insect. This could be literally translated as the gnawing locust, the swarming locust, the licking locust, and the consuming locust. Some believe this was an actual locust swarm that ate everything in site. Others believe these four stages of locust represent the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greco-Macedonians, and the Romans. Each one of these successive empires attacked Judea with each one worse than its predecessor with the Romans being the worst. Locust often were sent by the God as a judgment or, in this case, a warning. It was the method of all the writing prophets to move from the local situation into the future. I believe Joel was both describing a literal situation and prophesying a future spiritual fulfillment of this literal situation. Joel describes this local calamity but his real intent is to warn of the judgment that is coming at the Day of the Lord.

Drunkenness was the only sin that Joel mentioned in his book. Old Wine was produced from grapes that had fermented and thus was

intoxicating. New wine, or *fresh wine*, as it is rendered in the Hebrew, was unfermented and unintoxicating.

- 6. For a nation has come upon My land, strong and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the cheek teeth of a great lion.**
- 7. He has laid My vine waste and barked up my fig tree. He made clean bare and cast it away, its branches being made white.**
- 8. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.**
- 9. The meal offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the House of the LORD. The priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn.**
- 10. The field is wasted, the land mourns for the grain is wasted, the new wine dried up, the oil languishes.**
- 11. Be ashamed, O you husbandmen! Howl, O you vine dressers, for the wheat and for the barley because the harvest of the field perished.**
- 12. The vine dried up and the fig tree languishes. The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, all the trees of the field are withered because joy has withered away from the sons of men.**

In this first chapter the "nation" is an army of locust. These locust have eaten and destroyed everything in site. In later chapters the army of locust becomes something else. (First, the natural, and then the spiritual- 1st Corinthians 15:46). Joel is suggesting that Israel, or the Church, should be grieving because of their sin which had separated them from Jehovah, much like a young woman would grieve for her fiancée, and implies that these calamities are the result of God judging Israel for its disobedience. However, the greatest sorrow for a religious Jew was the cessation of the usual temple worship.

The field represents the world. The grain represents the revealed word of God. The new wine represents joy and new revelation or truth.

Oil represents the Holy Spirit and the anointing.

I believe that we can see what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us by looking at verse 12 symbolically. The vine is our connection to Jesus (He is the vine; we are the branches). The fig tree represents the Church. The pomegranate represents the fruit of the Spirit. The palm tree represents uprightness and fruitfulness. I am unclear as to what the apple tree symbolizes. Indeed many commentators suggest that this was a bad translation, and that this is really referring to an orange or some other tree. I would suggested that, if this is the apple tree, that it refers to our closeness with the Father, as in *we are the apple of His eye*. At any rate , all these things have withered away because the Body of Christ is

not walking in joy, which is its strength. The Word tells us that we should *rejoice evermore* (1st Thessalonians 5:16). No matter how dismal things become we can ALWAYS rejoice in the fact that Jesus loves us and gave His life for us, and we must be very careful that the enemy not steal our joy.

13. Gird yourselves and lament, you priests. Howl, you ministers of the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God, for the meal offering and the drink offering are withheld from the House of God.

14. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land at the House of the LORD, your God, and cry to the LORD.

The priests had nothing to use for offerings. In previous times, the Lord told His people to come before Him with joy. For the first time He is telling His people to mourn. Why? Because of the sin of the nation.

The only means to avoid God's wrath and have everything restored is true repentance.

Also, for the first time, according to J. Vernon McGee, God asked His people, from the elders all the way down to the children, to fast.

15. Woe for the Day! For the Day of the LORD is at hand and it will come as a destruction from the Almighty.

16. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, yes, joy and gladness from the House of our God?

17. The seed is rotten under their clods, the corners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down, for the grain is withered.

18. How the beasts do groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture. Yes, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

The Day of the Lord is spoken of both in the Old and the New Testament. We need to realize that this is a day of *destruction from the Almighty*. I believe we will live to see the beginnings of this time period in history, if it has not already to some minor extent begun. These verses make me think that it will be a day marked by worldwide famine.

19. LORD, to You will I cry for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness and the flame has burned all the trees of the field.

20. The beasts of the field cry also to You for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

The whole country looked like a fire had gone through and destroyed everything. Even the animals, both domestic and wild, were affected. This is a picture of the Day of the Lord that is coming.