

JOEL

Introduction

Author. Aside from the name of his father, Pethuel, we know nothing of Joel except what can be deduced from the book. Because of his references to Judah and Jerusalem he was probably from the southern kingdom. His intimate knowledge of the priesthood may suggest that he lived close to the environs of the city as well. He evidently was not a priest however because he sets himself apart from them (1:13; 2:17).

Date. Because Joel does not date the prophecy we must rely on internal evidence and any conclusion must remain tentative. Although dates from the 9th to the 4th centuries have been suggested, Joel's prophecy could well fit into the early reign of Josiah around 630 B.C.

Historical Background. Although there is no date attached, this much can be affirmed based upon internal evidence. A devastating invasion of locusts has just occurred. The temple has been plundered (3:5). Tyre, Sidon and Philistia have sold Judeans into slavery. And the temple is standing in chapter 1. Joel's concern is to relate the present destruction to a yet greater one in hope of securing repentance from the people.

Structure. The major problem of the book is the relationship of chapters one and two. While chapter one is clearly historical, it appears that chapter two is a prophecy of future desolation couched in terms of the historical locust plague which has just occurred. After the future judgmental aspects of the day of the Lord are considered then it is a natural transition to the blessings which the day of the Lord will bring (2:18--3::21).

Message Statement. Although Israel often thought she was immune to God's judgment Joel teaches that *Repentance is the key for deliverance both now and in the future.*

Argument

- 1A THE JUDGMENT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 1:1--2:18
The first section of the book deals with judgment. This division majors upon the most recent and the eventual judgment of the Day of the Lord.
- 1B Seen in the Historical Event of the Locust Plague 1:1-20
Joel's prophecy follows closely upon the heels of a devastating locust plague. Joel is concerned that the people understand God who is in control of all elements of nature has sent the plague as a rebuke for sin and as an incentive to repentance. The plague was not a freak of nature but a "Day of the Lord's" intervention and judgment. He calls the people to witness the devastation (1:1-7) and then immediately calls upon them to cry out to the Lord in repentance (1:8-18). He is the one who has brought about such desolation because of their sin. This part of the prophecy has a backward look.
- 2B Seen in a Future Event in Terms of a Locust Plague 2:1-17
Joel then uses the vivid results and memories of the recent plague to portray an even worse judgment which is coming upon the nation if they persist in their sin. The prophecy is set in terms of a locust plague but its effects are cosmic in proportion (2:1-11). In light of this threat of future desolation Joel again exhorts the kind of repentance that is necessary for deliverance (2:12-17). Assuming that this kind of repentance will indeed be forthcoming, then Joel can move into the blessings that the day of the Lord will hold for Israel. If they repent they can expect deliverance of cosmic proportion.
- 2A THE DELIVERANCE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD 2:18--3:21
The second major section deals with deliverance. Like the first section it is divided into an immediate concern and also a more distant concern, both of which involve God's deliverance of the nation.
- 1B The Promise of Immediate Deliverance 2:18-27
While the prophet's interweaving of the present age and the eschaton can make this section difficult to interpret, this passage seems to have immediate application as well as future.
- 2B The Promise of Future Deliverance 2:28--3:21
This section seems to have primary reference to the eschaton (although Peter's use of it may indicate that some of the features already have application). The deliverance of the nation involves blessings for them and judgment upon their enemies. The blessings are described as the pouring out of the Spirit and deliverance (2:28-32). The judgment upon the nations covers a proportionally larger section (3:1-17). This day of decision in the valley of "Jehoshaphat" is an awesome day in which the sun and moon grow dark and the earth and heavens tremble (3:15-16). Finally, the book ends on a high note with the prosperity of Israel. In contrast to the devastation of the locust plague, "the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk," (3:18).

Outline

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| 1A | THE JUDGMENT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD | 1:1--2:18 |
| 1B | <u>Seen in the Historical Event of the Locust Plague</u> | 1:1-20 |
| 1C | Call to the people to witness the desolation | 1:1-7 |
| 1D | The challenge to the people | 1:1-3 |
| 2D | The description of the invasion | 1:4-7 |
| 2C | Call to the people to wail to the Lord | 1:8-18 |
| 1D | To the people | 1:8-12 |
| 2D | To the priests | 1:13-18 |
| 1E | the command | 1:13-14 |
| 2E | the reasons | 1:15-18 |
| 3C | Cry of the prophet | 1:19-20 |
| 2B | <u>Seen in a Future Event in Terms of a Locust Plague</u> | 2:1-17 |
| 1C | The prophecy of future desolation | 2:1-11 |
| 1D | A time of darkness and gloom | 2:1-2 |
| 2D | A time of terror | 2:3-6 |
| 3D | A time of no escape | 2:7-11 |
| 2C | The exhortation for repentance in view of the desolation | 2:12-17 |
| 2A | THE DELIVERANCE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD | 2:18--3:21 |
| 1B | <u>The Promise of Immediate Deliverance</u> | 2:18-27 |
| 1C | The summary: restoration | 2:18-20 |
| 2C | The application: rejoice | 2:21-27 |
| 2B | <u>The Promise of Future Deliverance</u> | 2:28--3:21 |
| 1C | Blessings for Israel | 2:28-32 |
| 1D | The pouring out of the Spirit | 2:28-29 |
| 2D | Cosmic wonders and rescue | 2:30-32 |
| 2C | Judgment for the nations | 3:1-17 |
| 1D | Yahweh judges the nations at Jehoshaphat | 3:1-8 |
| 2D | Yahweh declares holy war against the nations | 3:9-18 |
| 1E | the people prepared for war | 3:9-12 |
| 2E | the enemy judged | 3:13-16 |
| 3E | the results | 3:17 |
| 3C | Blessings for Israel | 3:18-21 |
| 1D | Prosperity in the land | 3:18-20 |
| 2D | Vengeance on the wicked | 3:21 |