

# Snapshot of Joel

## The Prophet:

Joel (Hebrew, Yo-el) means “Jehovah is God.” He is often called the prophet of Pentecost because of his foretelling of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day. Son of Petheul (Bethuel in Septuagint and Syriac versions). Not a whole lot is known about Joel, other than what is conjectured from internal evidence. Probably a native of Judah, perhaps even Jerusalem (cf. 1:9,13,14; 2:1,15-17,23,32; 3:1,5,6,16,17,20,21). Some think, because of his statements about the priesthood in 1:13-14 and 2:17, that Joel may have been a priest.

## Date:

Joel gives no explicit time frame to his prophetic work. As with many, this book is given both an early and late date. Consider the following reasons for an early date (circa 830 BC):

1. Both in the Hebrew Canon and in the Septuagint, Joel is grouped among the early, pre-exilic prophets.
2. The threat of oppression is from Philistia, Egypt, Phoenicia, and Edom (early enemies) rather than Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.
3. It is estimated that twenty seven phrases, clauses, or expressions in the seventy-three verses of Joel’s book have parallels in other Old Testament writings. Note especially the correlations between Joel and Amos (an undoubtedly early writer): Amos 1:2 → Joel 4:16; Amos 9:13 → Joel 3:18; cf. Amos 4:6-9.
4. The conditions, religiously and politically, as described by Joel fit well into the time frame of the early rule of Joash, king of Judah, while under the direction of Jehoiada, the priest.

## Keys:

Key phrase: “Day of the Lord” (used five times: 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14) Joel seems to be one of the first to use this expression.

Key verses: 2:11,28-29

Announced the great and terrible “day of the Lord.” The plague of locusts is a warning and only precedes a greater judgment from God if repentance is not forthcoming.

## Literary Style:

Joel's literary style is impressive. He uses almost exclusively direct address, instead of the common prophetic narrative. Hebrew scholars call Joel classical Hebrew. Joel uses literary form beautifully. Notice how he connects his thoughts together by his use of repetitious phrases and ideas. Chapter 2:1-11 is parallel to 1:2-12; chapter 2:12-17 is parallel to 1:13-20. Compare the following: 2:2b to 1:2; 2:10 to 2:2a; 2:15 to 2:1; 2:21 to 2:20 (done great things); 2:22 to 1:7; 2:23-24 to 1:16-20; 2:25 to 2:11 (army); 2:27 to 2:17. Compare this style to the book of James in the New Testament.

## Analysis

The prophet Joel uses a recent locust invasion as an object lesson. Everyone had been affected. The priests were urged to call an assembly and call on the people to repent in view of the day of the Lord. He warns the people of Judah that the locust invasion was a judgment from God and a mere foretaste of what was to come. They are, therefore, urged to repent to receive God's mercy.

Joel then describes a healing of the land that would occur when they come to God in genuine repentance. He then prophesies of the more important spiritual blessings which would come in the latter days when God would pour forth His Spirit in all flesh.

The book closes by describing the eventual destruction which was to come upon the enemies of God and the gathering together of the faithful remnant.

## Outline of Joel

- I. The Plague of Locusts (1:1—2:27)
  - A. The terrible devastation (1:1-20)
  - B. A call to repentance (2:1-17)
  - C. The restoration which would follow repentance (2:18-27)
- II. God's Promise to Bless Mankind (2:28—3:21)
  - A. The outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-32)
  - B. God's judgment of His enemies and the salvation of His own (3:1-21)

## Lessons For Today

1. Sinners should tremble at the coming judgment.
2. God seeks godly sorrow and genuine repentance.
3. Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 is seen in Acts 2:17-21.