

Week of June 26-July 3



Joel Summary

The prophet **Joel** wrote it sometime before the fall and exiles of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Key personalities are Joel and the people of Judah. Its purpose was to call the Southern Kingdom to repentance or prepare for the coming judgment. Joel describes the locust that inflicts severe damage to everything in their paths and warns that it is only the beginning of what is to come.

We know nothing of Joel beyond this book. He was content to be God's mouthpiece and remain unknown. His message was one of unparalleled woe.

.Joel 1 The Plague of Locusts and Call for Repentance

God called Joel to prophesy following a severe locust plague. A mighty "army of locusts" had stripped the entire land of produce, the worst possible calamity for a nation largely dependent on agriculture. This unprecedented disaster had robbed the people of their joy. Even the drunkards sorrowed because the locusts had deprived them of their wine.

In contrast with God's disobedient people, the small insect, the locust, always does his will. God used the locust, among other things, to judge Egypt. Moses later prophesied that God would use locusts, among other things, to punish his people if they were disobedient. Now that prophecy was fulfilled.

He then called for a national time of mourning, during which all the people would gather in the Temple and seek God's help. Joel saw the plague as a foreshadowing of "the day of the Lord," which was "on the way" and which would be a time of "destruction."

Joel 2 The Promise of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

This chapter repeats the announcement to Jerusalem and describes the movement of troops (presumably the locusts) across the land. At this time, repentance was still appropriate.

There was hope beyond judgment on that day if the people repented. If the people repented, God would restore agriculture productivity and dignity to the nation. He would drive out the locust army, and they would see that He was God.

After repentance, a great outpouring of God's spirit would bring a renewal "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." All who called on the Lord will be saved. Mount Zion and Jerusalem would be the site of that deliverance. In that great time, salvation will be available to all who seek God without distinction of age, gender, or social status.

Who is this God? He is without beginning or end, self-existent, no one created Him. He is responsible to no one, self-sufficient, needs no one, depends on no one for anything. Any lesser god is not God. What has He done? He has delivered us from death, poverty, slavery, disease. We have all been delivered, but we are ungrateful, disobedient, rebellious, and ruled by sin.

Joel 3 Day of Judgment and Salvation

The last chapter pictures a phase of the great day of the Lord when nations are gathered for judgment. Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia are called by name to charge them with selling Hebrew slaves. Such crimes may well have been perpetrated during the entire period described by the Minor Prophets (about 750-400 B.C.). Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia were great trading centers whose commerce was hardly interrupted by the rise and fall of empires.

There will be a judgment that would disarm these peoples and in which the Lord was a refuge for His people, Israel. Zion is recognized as God's holy dwelling, safe from invading foreigners.

Verse 19 speaks of desolation for Egypt and Edom because of violence done to Judah. But Judah and Jerusalem were inhabited still, for "the LORD dwells in Zion."

Jeremiah Summary

Jeremiah, the prophet of the broken heart, wrote this book. Most prophets remain hidden (don't project themselves on the pages of their prophecies), but Jeremiah is an autobiography. He was born a priest in Anathoth and was chosen to be a prophet before he was born. He was called to be a prophet when he was young and was commissioned by God to be a prophet. He began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah and was a mourner at his funeral. He was forbidden to marry because of the terrible times in which he lived. He never made a convert and was rejected by his people, hated, beaten, put in stocks, imprisoned, and charged with being a traitor. His message broke his own heart. He wanted to reign, but God wouldn't let him. He saw the destruction of Jerusalem and its captivity.

The book of Jeremiah is prophecy and History, although not completely in chronological order. Jeremiah wrote it sometime during his ministry about 626-586 B.C. Key personalities are the many kings of Judah, Baruch, Ebdemelech, King Nebuchadnezzar, and the Rechabites.

Its purpose was to warn of the destruction that they were about to face and to urge Judah to return and submit to God. He identifies their sins and treachery, as he wants them to realize the serious condition of their sinful ways. He then gives prophecies of the coming king and the New Covenant that would be made.

In chapters 1-10, God calls Jeremiah and proclaims, "I have put My words in your mouth." Jeremiah condemns Judah for their sins and attacks their faithlessness, obviously angry over their blatant sin.

Jeremiah 1 Jeremiah's Call

Before Jeremiah's conception and birth, the Lord had chosen him to be His prophet. When Jeremiah objected that he was too young and unable to speak for the task, the Lord assured him of His protective presence. The prophet's divinely appointed words would determine the destiny of nations.

Through a pun based on a vision, the Lord assured the prophet that the divine message spoken through him would be fulfilled. When Jeremiah identified an almond branch, the Lord punned on its name,

announcing that He was "watching" carefully to assure the realization of the prophetic word.

Through another vision, that of a boiling pot tilting southward, the Lord revealed that Jeremiah's message would be one of impending judgment. The boiling pot symbolized foreign armies that would invade the land from the north as instruments of judgments against God's idolatrous people.

The Lord urged Jeremiah to declare His word boldly and fearlessly, promising him protection from his hostile audience.

Jeremiah 2 God Accuses His Unfaithful People

Israel's history was one of apostasy. Early Israel had faithfully followed the Lord and enjoyed His protection. Later generations turned to idols, forgot the Lord's mighty deeds, and defiled the land God had graciously given them. Even the priests, civil leaders, and prophets abandoned the Lord.

Unlike pagans, who maintained loyalty to their worthless gods, Israel exchanged their glorious God and His blessings for useless idols. Consequently, they suffered humiliation at the hands of foreigners. Still, they sought protective alliances with these same nations.

The Lord compared rebellious and idolatrous Israel to a prostitute and a good grapevine turned wild. Their guilt was like an irremovable stain in the sight of God. In their frantic pursuit of false gods, they were like a skittish female camel dashing about or a lusty female donkey pursuing a mate. Idolatry can only result in shame. The people's idols would prove futile in the coming crisis.

Despite their unfaithfulness, the people claimed to be innocent and accused the Lord of treating them unfairly. In response, the Lord pointed to their blatant rebellion and shameless acts of idolatry throughout the land.

Jeremiah 3 A Call for Repentance

Idolatrous Judah was even more corrupt than their sister, the Northern Kingdom, had been. Though the Lord had swept the Northern Kingdom away into exile, Judah had not learned from their northern sister's example. The time for decision had come. Judah's only hope was to repent. The Lord appealed to His faithless people to confess their sins, turn from their idols, and commit themselves to the Lord with renewed devotion. He promised to give them godly leaders and make Jerusalem the focal point of His worldwide rule. Nations would travel to the city to worship the Lord. Judah would be reunited with the exiled Northern Kingdom and would possess the promised land.

Jeremiah 4 An Invasion from the North

The alternative to repentance was destruction. If Judah persisted in its sin, the Lord would bring a mighty army down from the north to devastate the land. Reference is made to the Babylonians, who would attack with the ferocity of a lion, the power of a whirlwind, and the swiftness of an eagle. The people would flee for their lives; and Jerusalem, abandoned to its doom by its idol-gods, would cry out in panic. Conditions in the ruined and deserted land would resemble those before creation, when the earth was formless, empty, and shrouded in darkness.

Throughout the dramatic chapter speeches and vivid imagery are used to emphasize the urgency of the hour. Calls to alarm, lamentations, denunciations, a taunt, and an impassioned appeal for repentance are combined with striking descriptions of the invaders and their effect upon the land.

Jeremiah 5 A Sinful Society Condemned

This chapter restates why judgment was impending. Without exception, the residents of Jerusalem had resisted the Lord's discipline and rebelled against His commandments. Idolatry and sexual immorality were prevalent throughout the land. The people believed the false prophets' message of security. Rich, powerful men exploited others and neglected the cause of the weak and oppressed. Instead of repenting and recognizing God as the source of their blessings, the people stubbornly continued in their sinful ways. Judgment was inevitable for such a nation. The fearsome Babylonians would devour their crops and herds, kill their children, and destroy their cities. Since God's people insisted on acting like pagans, they would serve pagans in a pagan land.

Jeremiah 6 Jerusalem Attacked

The invasion threatened in chapters 4 and 5 now takes on even more frightening proportions as the coming siege of Jerusalem is depicted. In succession, one hears the Lord's call of alarm to the residents of Benjamin and Judah, the enemy army's call to war, the Lord's summons to this army, a warning to Jerusalem, and the Lord's authorization of foreigners to "glean" His people.

The prophet then interjected a word. Though the people were obstinate and rejected his message of judgment, he was compelled to continue preaching it. God encouraged him to persevere in his proclamation of coming wrath because judgment was inevitable for such a corrupt nation. Even the religious leaders were greedy and deceitful. They glossed over the nation's dire situation and proclaimed a message of false hope. The people refused to obey God's law or to listen to His prophets. Their empty sacrifices would not prevent the coming disaster. The mighty northern army would march relentlessly forward, causing terror and grief among the people. In conclusion, the Lord compared Jeremiah's role to that of a metal tester. Having seen the people's moral character revealed in their response to his ministry, Jeremiah observed that they were rebels in need of the hot, purifying fires of divine judgment.