

# Joel

## Summary

In this book, the prophet Joel brings both a reminder of past judgment, as well as a prophecy of the future day of the Lord. Joel most likely prophesied to the people of Judah in the years after their return from Babylon. The prophet Joel describes a horrible plague of locusts that have descended on the people of Judah, which becomes a picture of judgment in the final days. In the second half of the book, the prophet reminds the people that God is merciful and desires for His people to return to Him. Joel finishes his prophecy with a reminder that Judah shall be redeemed and those who continue to trust God will be in communion with Him in the end.

## Author

The prophet Joel, son of Pethuel, wrote the book of Joel. Judging from his concern with Judah and Jerusalem, it seems likely that Joel lived in that area. We gather that he was not part of the priests or elders because he addresses them as an outsider within his prophecy.

## Date

Due to the lack of specific biographical information, the exact date of Joel's prophecy is unknown but dates somewhere between the seventh and early fifth centuries B.C. It is most likely that the date is around 500 B.C. due to various factors. There are indications pointing towards a post-exilic time. The three main indicators in support of a post-exilic date are the author's reference to the exile as a past event, the reference to a time in which Jerusalem was previously conquered by an enemy, and the fact that there is no reference to a king.

## Primary Characters

Joel (Joel 1-3)

People of Judah (Joel 1-3)

## Historical Moments

The Locust Plague in Judah (Joel 1)

## Major Theological Themes

**God Is Sovereign** - God is the Sovereign Creator of the entire universe, and His control over the world is unlimited. Throughout the book of Joel, there is a reference to God controlling the rain, the sun, the moon, and other natural elements. Joel shows that even the greatest nations on earth pale in comparison to the all-encompassing power of God.

**God Cares About the Heart** - Despite the fact that many of the people acted in a way that would indicate that they wanted to return to the Lord, their hearts were not in line with their actions. Joel 2:13 says, *Rend your hearts and not your garments*, indicating that the people did not have a true heart change, despite the outward signs.

## Lessons Learned from Joel

**Empty Actions Do Not Please the Lord** - Throughout the Gospels, Jesus Christ makes it very clear to religious leaders that simply following a set of rules is not what God desires. Instead, He desperately desires a change of the heart. The people of Judah went to extreme lengths to show their anguish, but Joel pointed out that their hearts did not break for their injustices and neglect. We must always be careful to not simply go through the motions of religion but truly engage in a living and active relationship with our Creator.

**God Wins In the End** - Joel talks about the Day of the Lord, which is a reference to the final judgment day in which humanity will have to stand before their Maker. Though the picture is daunting, as portrayed by the prophet Joel, it does not need to be intimidating for believers in Jesus Christ. Joel says that the enemies of God will be judged, but God's people will be in perfect communion with Him forever.