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Joel 1

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Joel 1.

Topics.

- A message for every generation.
- A locust plague.
- The characteristics of the locust.
- Judah is called to repentance.
- A nation to invade Judah.
- The Day of the LORD is near.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Little is known about the prophet Joel, although his concern for Judah and Jerusalem suggests that he ministered in the southern kingdom. While the date of the book is uncertain (ninth to sixth century B.C. Joel urged everyone to repent, and told of a day when God would "pour out His Spirit on all flesh" (2:28), that day arrived on Pentecost. (Acts 2:17).

THE LORD USES SECULAR NATIONS

The LORD uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. He used Assyria to bring judgment on Israel in the land of Samaria (the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom) and Babylon to bring judgment on Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem). Prior to Joel's prophecy Assyria had taken Israel captive. In the book of Joel Babylon (called the Northern Army) is pictured as an army of locusts. Many times, God through the prophets warned Judah they would be taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years, because of their rebellion against the LORD, but God would look after them while they were held captive and at the end of the seventy years, He would deliver them.

Joel's focus is Judah, God is about to use Babylon to bring Judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the land of Judah because of their gross sin. Joel is warning the people of Judah that the armies (the locusts) of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon are about to besiege the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding land. Sadly, the people did not heed Joel's warning of impending doom. Babylon spent about two years besieging Jerusalem, the people were without food and the inhabitants of the city were taken captive for seventy years, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple of God pillaged (see Jeremiah chapters 50, 51, 52). Though Joel's focus is upon Judah at this particular period of time in history his prophetic message carries with it an echo of a future day when God will intervene in the history of the world once again and judge not only Judah, but the entire world.

JOEL 1:1-3

A Message for Every Generation.

- **Joel 1:1-3:** The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel: ²Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? ³Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.

Pethuel: means God's opening.

Joel the prophet: all we know of Joel's life is that he is the author of the second of the minor books of the prophets. His name means, "The LORD (Yahweh) is God." There are others mentioned in the Old Testament named Joel. In this prophetic message Joel is about to give Judah a prophecy regarding something that has never happened to Judah before and encourages every generation to tell the next generation of what he is about to say to them.

JOEL 1:4

A Locust Plague.

- **Joel 1:4:** What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

The locusts are called a northern army (Joel 2:20) and refer to Babylon, they are also given the following titles:

- A nation powerful and beyond number (Joel 1:6).
- A great and powerful people (Joel 2:2).
- The northern army (Joel 2:20).
- My (God's) great army (Joel 2:25).

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All these titles refer to Babylon and its allies. In the book of Jeremiah God calls Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon His servant (Jer. 25:1-2; 9-11) and in Joel God refers to the armies of Babylon as "My great army" (Joel 2:25).

The locusts spoken of in Joel's prophetic message are the armies and nations of the following verses:

- The nation that comes against God's land, powerful and beyond number. (Joel 1:6-7).
- A great and powerful people spread on God's Holy Mountain when the Day of the LORD is near. (Joel 2:1-2).
- God's great Army which is powerful and executes God's word. (Joel 2:11).
- My (God's) great army, which He sent among you (Judah). (Joel 2:25).

The LORD punished Judah by using His servant Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and his great armies (see Jeremiah chapter 49, 50, 51, 52).

The characteristics of the locust: the locust is one of over five thousand species of grasshopper specially adapted for long migratory flights. They must flap their wings and jump high to get airborne, because of the weight of their bodies, but once in flight they are able to fly long distances. There are numberless swarms of locust, particularly the species that infests oriental countries. The locust will eat almost anything; they travel in huge numbers capable of destroying entire fields of cultivated plants and any nearby vegetation. Their wings make a clattering sound as they travel and in approaching swarms, they create an ominous hum. There are times when the swarms are so large, they block out the sunlight.

Locusts are normally shy, solitary creatures, but in a swarm, they are an unstoppable moving cloud of millions of flying grasshoppers capable of stripping fields of crops in a matter of hours. For these reasons the locust is a fitting symbol for the power and destructive might of Babylon's armies and her allies. The Oxford team has found that "hot-spots" on the hind legs of the locusts are stimulated when they group together turning the relatively harmless insects into destructive pests. Even today millions of locusts have swarmed across several countries presenting major problems in the Middle East and many South African Nations. In the town of Eilat (a popular place with British tourists) thousands of dead locusts were found piled up in swimming pools.

JOEL 1:5

Judah Called to Repentance.

- **Joel 1:5:** Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.

Joel calls the inhabitants of Judah to repentance.

Sins in the land of Judah and Jerusalem at this time: were gross idolatry, astrology and occultism. They not only had altars for worshipping the host of heaven (the sun, moon, stars and planets) in the court of the temple and worshipped at the altars of Baal, but were even sacrificing their sons on the altars of Molech in the Hinnom Valley. Added to these abominations they were shedding innocent blood, cheating the innocent out of justice, not helping the less fortunate and oppressing the poor for their own gain all of these gross wickedness's permeated the land of Judah and Israel.

JOEL 1:6-7

A Nation to Invade Judah.

- **Joel 1:6-7:** For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. ⁷It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white.

Joel sees in his vision a nation powerful and beyond numbering symbolized by locusts.

The powerful nation that has come up against God's land: is Babylon.

Teeth like lions' teeth: means Babylon's armies devour and destroy everything in their path.

Fangs like a lioness: a lioness hunts for food, so in this context fangs like a lioness are a symbol of a hunter hunting for spoil, (riches and treasures). Babylon pillaged the wealth and riches from God's Temple.

Splintered my fig tree: refers to the pain brought upon the people of Judah.

Stripped off their bark and thrown it down: refers to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Their branches are made white: means the land of Judah and city of Jerusalem are totally stripped bare (their houses were burnt, the city of Jerusalem destroyed, the temple pillaged, and the people were taken captive to Babylon for seventy years).

A principle in Bible prophecy: this event has not taken place, yet Joel speaks it in the past tense as though it has already happened. This is simply because Joel is speaking what he is seeing happening in his vision. God is giving Joel a complete picture in his mind of what is about to take place. Joel in a sense is watching a movie being played out in his mind and is simply speaking it out as the events unfold, thus the reason Joel speaks in the past tense, in his mind the events have already taken place, but in real life they are still to be played out in the future.

JOEL 1:8-3

Call to Repentance.

- **Joel 1:8-12:** Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.
⁹The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD. ¹⁰The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes. ¹¹Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. ¹²The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.

The priests, fields and ground mourn: Joel, in the vision going on in his mind sees the priest's in mourning, the ground destroyed and the crops dried up and perishing. When Joel's prophecy came to pass Judah was taken captive by Babylon for seventy years so there was no-one to till the ground or farm the land so everything died.

JOEL 1:13-14

Call to Repentance.

- **Joel 1:13-14:** Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

Priests and ministers of the altar, the elders and all the inhabitants of the land are called to repent.

JOEL 1:15-17

The Day of the LORD is near

- **Joel 1:15-17:** Alas for the day! For *the day of the LORD* is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. ¹⁶Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? ¹⁷The seed shrivels under the clods; the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are torn down because the grain has dried up.

Though some of the events prophesied in these verses are spoken in the present tense the actual events in real life are still to take place in the near future. This is a vision that Joel is seeing in his mind in the present moment, but the events are still to be fulfilled in real life in the future.

Is not the food cut off before our eyes: refers to Babylon besieging Jerusalem for nearly two years so no-one could go in or out, thus Judah's food supply diminished.

The Day of the LORD: in this context is Babylon's impending invasion of Judah.

These foreboding words of Joel were fulfilled through Babylon: Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants (Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to pagan gods again).

(2 Chron. 36:22-23) (Ezra. 1:1-2) (Ezra. 5:13-17)
(Ezra. 6:3) (Ezra. 6:14).

JOEL 1:18-20

The Animals Groan.

- **Joel 1:18-20:** How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed because there is no pasture for them; even the flocks of sheep suffer. ¹⁹To you, O LORD, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. ²⁰Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Fire has devoured the pastures: refers to Babylon.

Joel in the vision being played out in his mind sees that the animals will also be suffering because the fields will be totally stripped bare of grass and vegetation, and the water brooks will be dried up.

At the time of Joel's prophecy: Assyria had invaded the land of Samaria and taken Israel (the Northern Kingdom) (ten tribes) captive, later Babylon's armies surrounded Jerusalem and after a bitter siege of a year and a half the city fell to Nebuchadnezzar and was destroyed. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken there with him (587 B.C.).

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time which ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
