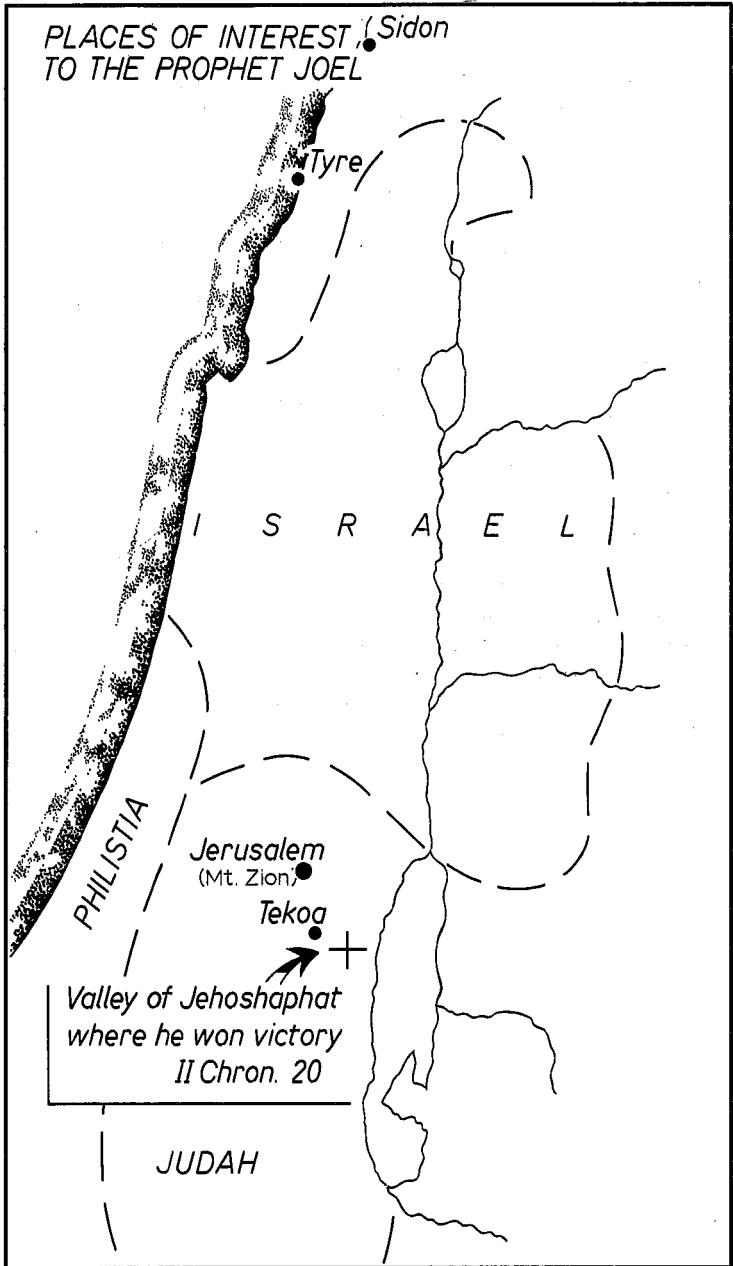


MINOR PROPHETS





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STREET IN JERUSALEM.

# JOEL

## INTRODUCTION

*Author:* "Joel, the son of Pethuel," of whom nothing besides this book is known. The name "Joel" means literally, "Jehovah is God." The name Joel is common among the people of the Old Testament (I Sam. 8:2; Neh. 11:9). There are certain inferences we may make of his character from his style of writing. He stands out as a literary master although his style of writing is simple and vivid. He carefully polishes and beautifies his work as perhaps no other Old Testament writer does. His ability to describe is forceful and minute. Everything is set before us, as though we ourselves saw it. The prophet adds detail to detail; parallelism to parallelism; each clear, brief, distinct, a picture in itself, yet adding to the effect of the whole. Lange says, "The tenderness of his soul is evidenced by his lingering over the desolation which he foresees. It is like one counting over, one by one, the losses he endures in the privations of others." He even portrays nature and the beasts themselves mourning as he sympathized with the extremities of the dumb animals during the droughts. Joel, as is evidenced by his description of how repentance should be done, was a man of deep religious feelings, heartfelt experience and warm sympathy. He threatens, warns and penetrates into the very recesses of the soul. His writing seems to characterize him as a poetic man of strength, tenderness, insight and dignity. He definitely is a man of moral integrity. He was undoubtedly a native of Judah and most likely of Jerusalem itself for he speaks like a native (2:1, 15, 32; 3:16, 17, 21; 2:32; 3:20). He was very familiar with the Temple and the ministry of the priests (1:9, 13, 14, 16; 2:14, 17; 3:18).

*Date:* Kirkpatrick ("Doctrine of The Prophets") rightly says, "The date of Joel's prophecy is one of the most keenly debated problems of Biblical criticism." Many of the destructive "higher critics" place Joel as late as 586 B.C. (the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar) and some as extremely late as 400 B.C. or later. We suspect this late dating of Joel is done to preclude the possibility of predictive prophecy—to destroy the supernaturalness of the book. For a fair presentation and excellent refutation of the critical late date read A. F. Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of The Prophets," pub. Zondervan.

The evidence for an early date for Joel's prophecy is, to us, conclusive. (1) The position of the book in the canon of the O.T. establishes it. Joel is placed among those books which are definitely pre-Assyrian. The chronological intention of this grouping cannot be

## INTRODUCTION

mistaken. This position was formulated at least as early as 300 B.C. and was the position in the canon of the O.T. used by Jesus and the apostles. (2) According to Joel himself, the priests were held in high esteem and the Temple services were being maintained when he prophesied. This was certainly not true of anytime during the captivities nor for a long time afterward. It would indicate a time early in the history of the southern kingdom. (3) The silence of Joel concerning a king and a royal court on the one hand and the pre-eminence and authority Joel gives to the priesthood on the other is indicative of the circumstances of an early date. Furthermore, the silence of Joel concerning the northern kingdom lends to this early date. There is only one period in the history of Judah to which these circumstances may point—the earlier part of the reign of Joash (c. 837 B.C.), who was crowned king when a boy of seven years of age. During this time Jehoiada, high priest, was *de facto* ruler of Judah. Priestly influence was in the ascendancy. (4) The contents of this book in relation to foreign nations also testifies to its early date. A very early date will account for the absence of all mention by Joel of Syria, Assyria and Babylon. These nations came into contact with Judah at a later date. While on the other hand Joel mentions nations who were enemies of Judah before and during the reign of Joash (e.g. Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, Edom). (5) Kirkpatrick argues further for the early date from Joel's relation to Amos and Ezekiel. They seem to have borrowed some phrases and words from Joel thus Joel would have been written earlier than Amos whose early date is well established. The cumulative evidence mentioned above definitely places the prophecy of Joel near the decade 840-830 B.C. in the days of the boy king, Joash, when Jehoiada, high priest, was the ruler in fact.

*Background of The Times:* There had been a disastrous locust plague throughout the southern kingdom. In addition a drought came upon the land. So severe were the circumstances there was not even enough grain with which to make a "cereal offering" before the Lord. It was so terrible a time it was a "Day of Jehovah," foreshadowing the great and terrible "Day of Jehovah" to come. Joel lived and prophesied during the reign of Joash. Previous to the ascension of Joash to the throne the wicked, murderous, usurper Queen Athaliah ruled and idolatry flourished. Jehoiada, the high priest, led a revolt which deposed Athaliah and placed Joash, rightful heir to the throne, as titular head of the nation. The religious reform instituted by Jehoiada at this same time seems to have been superficial and short-lived. The people turned reformation into formalism. Thus God, according to Joel, sent upon

## JOEL

the people these calamitous calls to repentance. Already the people were on the way to the moral decadence against which Amos and Hosea prophesy a few years later. Joel must exhort the "drunkards" to repentance (1:5). Already the priests must be reminded that God desires heartfelt repentance and not formalism (1:13; 2:17). There does not seem to be any extensive idolatry as under Athaliah or as later in the time of Isaiah, but the nation is in dire need of repentance.

*The Purpose and Teaching of Joel:* Joel has been sent from God to call the covenant people to repentance and holiness. God desires a sanctified people through whom He may fulfill His covenant promises of redemption for the world.

To bring this people to repentance and holiness of life the great day of Jehovah's chastening judgment has come upon the land in a locust plague and drought. But when they repent God redeems them. Thus the ever-recurring method of God in saving the world is judgment causing repentance followed by redemption as He purifies a people fit for communion with Him. This method reached its perfection (completion—fulfillment) in the Messiah and His spiritual kingdom. Even the first coming of the Messiah is spoken of as a day of Jehovah's judgment (cf. Malachi 3:1-4; Jn. 9:39; 16:11). So, combined in the Messiah and His kingdom is the method of God's salvation—judgment and redemption. This method God demonstrated over and over in the historic judgments and redemptions of national Israel and prophesied as coming upon a new covenant people in the last days time and time again through the O.T. prophets. Our salvation awaits only the consummation of final redemption and final judgment (Heb. 9:28). The next time Christ comes it will not be to reinstitute the Jewish sacrifices and Temple or to offer another opportunity for the Jews to be saved. He has dealt with sin once for all. God has overcome His enemies once for all. Each judgment/redemption experience of national Israel foreshadowed and predicted that final and complete judgment/redemption experience realized in Jesus Christ's first advent and the consummation awaits only His second advent. This is the message of Joel. And his message was primarily directed to his contemporaries. Judah was soon to come under the oppression of successive world empires. The cruelty and corruptness of these pagan oppressors would cause many of God's elect to faint for fear. They would wonder if the very existence of God's people and God's covenant promises should perish from the earth. So Joel was commissioned to preach the ultimate act of God's conquest over the powers of world darkness. God overcame the dominions of world power in Christ (cf. Jn. 16:33; Col. 2:15).

## INTRODUCTION

The dwelling of Jehovah among His people—the restoration of the communion between God and man which man wilfully rejected in Paradise—is the final goal of Joel's prophecy. This implies, of course, that God's people have been fitted for God's presence among them. This He also accomplished in Christ and continues to accomplish in the Messiah's kingdom. Truly, "Jehovah dwelleth in Zion." The main theme of Joel, then, is that the Lord has called this covenant people to repentance and holiness by natural judgments (2:12-14) so that He can fulfill His covenant promise to redeem them immediately Israel and materially (2:18-27) and future (new Israel, the church) (2:28—3:21; Acts 2:1) and spiritually (Eph. 1:3).

*Sermonic Outline of Joel:*

### REPENT

- I. Plea for Repentance 1:1—2:11
  - A. The Exclaimer—God's spokesman 1:1-3
  - B. The Extent—Vivid, arresting, forceful, 1:7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20; 2:2, 3, 9
  - C. The Executor—God, using natural agents, 1:6, 15, 19, 20; 2:2, 4-10, 11
- II. Plan for Repentance 3:12-17
  - A. The People 2:12-14
    1. Awake
    2. Wail, Lament, Weep
    3. Be confounded (humbled)
    4. Blow the trumpet in Zion (preach it)
    5. Tremble (revere)
    6. Fast, mourn
    7. Return to the Lord
  - B. The priests 2:15-16
    1. Gird on sackcloth, pass the night in penitent prayer
    2. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly
    3. Cry to the Lord (interceed)
    4. Lament, wail
- III. Purpose of Repentance 2:18—3:21
  - A. Immediate blessings 2:18-27
    1. Restoration of crops
    2. Removal of Plague
    3. Remembrance by the Lord

## B. Future blessings 2:28—3:21

1. God preparing a new people (His spirit upon all flesh)
2. God's victory over the enemies of His people
3. God's presence among His people.

## THE EXCLAIMER OF REPENTANCE— GOD'S PROPHET

TEXT: 1:1-3

- 1 The word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.
- 2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all inhabitants of the land.  
Hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers?
- 3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children,  
and their children another generation.

### QUERIES

- a. Who was Pethuel?
- b. Why ask if such a thing had happened in past generations?
- c. What purpose would be served in telling of this event for generations to come?

### PARAPHRASE

This is the message of Jehovah God that came by revelation to Joel who is the son of Pethuel. Listen to this all you aged men and let all the other people of the land give their attention! Are you able to recall in all your days or the days of your ancestors such a disaster as this? You shall teach your children the significance of this and your children shall teach their children and their children shall teach other generations.

### SUMMARY

The event Joel is about to interpret is so unprecedented it is to be used to teach many future generations of the judgment of God.

### COMMENT

v. 1 THE WORD OF JEHOVAH THAT CAME TO JOEL THE SON OF PETHUEL; Joel unequivocally claims his message to have been revealed from Jehovah. He did not get it from other prophets or from other sources. His interpretation of the locust plague and drought came di-