

Joel: The Man and His Work

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by

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The Man

The book of Joel opens up with a simple statement. It says, *"The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel."* We learn a few things from this statement. This man was a common man just like you and me. His name was Joel which means, **"The LORD is God."** He had a father whose name Pethuel. He was a son of Adam's race who was filled with sin to his core and in need of a Savior. We do not have his conversion experience or call from God. All we can deduct from the opening of His message is that the God of revelation delivered a message to a man He trusted who would deliver it to the people. The Apostle Paul would later write, *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*¹ Joel must have been a faithful man who sought to do the will of the Lord. When called upon, he delivered his message to the nation of Israel. Unlike many other prophets, Joel does not give us any specifics about the time of his delivery of the message. He does not connect his message with a particular king or nation which hinders us from easily discovering the time frame of the message. However, he does leave us with a certain theme, the Day of the LORD (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14), and an important question, "Who can abide (endure) it" (2:11)?

The Message

The word of the LORD is a common phrase denoting that God has spoken into time. A divine utterance from the Majesty of Heaven is delivered through His man in His time, at His place, and to His people. The word of the LORD has come to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and a few other prophets in the Old Testament. Some of God's prophet's described what came to them from God as a burden or a vision. Nevertheless, 2 Peter 1:21 says, *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* God spoke and still speaks through His Word and by His Spirit today. Joel's message was a warning to the people of his day, was used in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost to call the people to repentance then (Acts 2:16-21), and is a relevant warning of the approaching day of the Lord for the people of our day. God was willing to strip His people bare in order to reveal what He really wanted and deserved—their hearts (Joel 2:12-13).

Outline

- ❖ **1: The Day of the LORD is a day of destruction (locusts and drought)**
 - The present calamity has come to wake us up!
 - The material blessings were taken away (1:5)
 - The religious formalities were taken away (1:9)
 - The food supply was taken away (1:11-12)
 - Joy has withered away (1:12)
 - The spiritual leaders call for a fast and public assembly at the house of the LORD (1:13-14)
 - *Notice who is responsible:* Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.
 - ◆ The land suffers destruction and drought (1:17)
 - ◆ The beasts groan and are confused (1:18)
 - ◆ The Prophet pants for the LORD (1:19-20)
 - Will God's people seek the LORD?
- ❖ **2: The Day of the LORD is a day of darkness and dread (invading armies of the north symbolized by locusts)**
 - The coming calamity is near so wake up! Blow a trumpet; sound an alarm! Who can endure it?
 - The warning is sounded in Zion for the day of the LORD is coming (2:1)
 - The day is described (2:2)
 - The desolation is described (2:3)
 - The dreadful army is described (2:6)
 - *Notice who is responsible:* Joel 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

¹ 1 Corinthians 4:2

- Repentance from the heart is required in order to be spared!
 - The LORD speaks: Return and rend your heart!
 - Try Him and see if he will leave a blessing behind Him (2:14)
 - ◆ The trumpet is blown in Zion (2:15)
 - ◆ Everyone stops everything to assemble at the house of the LORD (2:16)
 - ◆ God becomes the Most Important Person to the covenant community.
 - ◆ The ministers of the LORD weep and intercedes appealing to God's glory being revealed among His people (2:17)
 - Redeeming love calms all fears and leads to rejoicing (2:18)
 - The LORD was jealous for His land.
 - The LORD was compassionate toward His people.
 - Restoration removes the fear and shame from God's people! (2:19-27)
 - Material blessings will be poured out on the land, animals, and children of Zion.
 - Future spiritual blessings will be poured out on all who call on the name of the LORD. (2:28-32)
 - The Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.
 - There will be wonders in the heavens and in the earth before the great and terrible day of the LORD.
 - Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.
 - The remnant shall be those whom the LORD calls
- ❖ **3: The Day of the LORD is a day of divine justice and death (The LORD will judge the nations)**
- The ultimate calamity will come so call out to the LORD today!
 - The captivity of Judah and Jerusalem shall be restored (3:1)
 - The nations shall be gathered for judgment for their injustices (3:2-8).
 - Prepare for war! (3:9-14)
 - Jehoshaphat means "God judges!"
 - *Notice who is responsible:* Joel 3:12-13 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.
 - Stir up the mighty men.
 - Sharpen your weapons.
 - Summons to the Valley of Judgment where God will sit to judge the nations.
 - ◆ The nations are ripe for a harvest of judgment for their wickedness.
 - The sickle knocks down the wheat for the threshing floor.
 - The winepress is full and the vats overflow express the enormous wickedness about to be crushed and treaded upon in justice, righteousness, and truth.
 - Sentence for the multitudes: divine justice and eternal death passed upon the wicked multitude (3:14)
 - The Savior roars like a lion from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem (3:16)
 - ◆ The heavens and earth quake but the LORD protects His covenant people
 - The LORD is the hope (refuge) for His people.
 - The LORD is the strength (stronghold) to the people of Israel
 - The LORD's protection and presence in wrath deepened the knowledge and intimacy of God's people (3:17)
 - The final scene of prosperity for God's people (3:18-21)
 - The mountains shall drip sweet wine with an abundance of vines.
 - The hills shall flow with milk with an abundance of flocks and herds.
 - All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters.
 - A life-giving stream (fountain) will flow forth from the house of the LORD and water the driest and most barren valleys.
 - All of God's people's enemies will be desolate and ruined for their injustices.
 - The LORD will cleanse/remove their guilt completely.

- The presence of God will dwell in Zion forever.

Application for Today

- God's Word still speaks into every culture. We have His self-revelation in His Word.**
 - All of God's Word from Genesis to Revelation is important for us to study, understand, and apply.
- God keeps His Word and punishes sin. We should learn obedience and train in righteousness.**
 - Exodus 10:12
 - Deuteronomy 28:15, 37-42
- National calamities should give everyone a wake-up call. God will get everyone's attention. We are called to listen, learn, and lean on Him.**
 - Hear this and pay attention, elders and citizens!
 - Awake, weep, and howl, you drunkards!
 - Be ashamed and wail, you farmers
 - Put on sackcloth, lament, wail, and call a fast and assembly, you priests
- God's people should mourn over sin and its devastating effects.**
 - Lament like a virgin whose fiancé has died prior to the marriage ceremony. Instead of a beautiful white wedding dress denoting a time of celebration, we have the emblem of wearing a black coarse sackcloth made of goat's hair denoting mourning.
 - Repentance and confession is necessary for true worship.
 - Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- Pure worship pours forth from the heart in response to the LORD God and His attributes which is extremely personal and expressed publically.**
 - Rend your heart and not your garments.
 - Gracious, merciful, Slow to anger, Of great kindness, abounding in steadfast love, Relents over disaster, Jealous
- The household of God where people gather in solemn assembly is the centerpiece for personal and national revival. God has poured out His Spirit on His people and we must be intimate with Him instead of grieving Him. Revival is personal and public.**
 - Ephesians 3:10, 4:30
- God covers guilt, fear, and shame with grace, mercy, and forgiveness through repentance and faith in His covenant-keeping and jealous love. He is a restorer.**
 - Although the economy was stricken and many of the sacrifices of grain and drink offerings ceased, the blood sacrifice was still being given. Life is in the blood, and the blood of the One Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross will never lose its power.
- God keeps good records will take vengeance on injustice. Therefore, we are called to trust Him for judgment, release our debtors with forgiveness, and display love rather than anger. He will set the record straight.**
 - Romans 12:19
- The LORD will roar as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and reign as King forever over all peoples in a spiritual and physical sense.**
 - Revelation 17:14, Revelation 19:16
- It's time to wake up for the Day is drawing near!**
 - The Day will arrive unexpectedly, immediately, and timely. 1 Thessalonians 5:2
 - God's wrath has fallen on Christ, is upon the unbeliever today, and will be poured out on all nations and individuals that forget God.
 - Let's walk in the fear of the LORD all the day long: Proverbs 23:17
 - Let's walk in the Spirit and be filled with Him instead of fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:18
 - Let's proclaim a "whosoever will let him come" gospel to the world. Romans 10:13
 - Let's wake up out of sleep and work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 13:11
 - Let's get in church, stay in church, and pour our heart out for the church Hebrews 10:25

Further Study: Joel quoted in the New Testament

Old Testament: Joel	New Testament
Joel 2:28-32	Acts 2:16-21
Joel 2:32a	Romans 10:13

Hymn for Reflection

Words & Music: Will L. Thompson (1847-1909), in *Highway Songs*, by E. Nickerson (Boston, Massachusetts: 1886)

This is one of the songs I grew up singing on Sunday mornings and during revival services at New Liberty Missionary Baptist Church in Cedar Grove, Tennessee. The words used to echo in my heart and mind for days while I considered my lost condition before the Lord. This song was one that I disliked wholeheartedly due to the simple yet profound truth found in it. I believe it captures the great reality of preparing to meet God. There is a great day coming!

Now, praise God, I can sing this song from a heart that has been rent, broken, and torn to pieces in repentance before the Almighty and restored, refreshed, and sealed by the Holy Spirit through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Instead of fear, there is love. Instead of despair, there is hope. Instead of shame, there is acceptance. Instead of anger, there is understanding and forgiveness. Instead of mourning, there is joy in the Lord. These promises are not just for you and me, but our God who is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" is willing and able to save all who call upon Him in sincerity and truth.

There's a great day coming, a great day coming;
 There's a great day coming by and by,
 When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left,
 Are you ready for that day to come?

Refrain

*Are you ready? Are you ready?
 Are you ready for the judgment day?
 Are you ready? Are you ready?
 For the judgment day?*

There's a bright day coming, a bright day coming;
 There's a bright day coming by and by.
 But its brightness shall only come to them that love the Lord.
 Are you ready for that day to come?

Refrain

There's a sad day coming, a sad day coming;
 There's a sad day coming by and by,
 When the sinner shall hear his doom: Depart, I know you not!
 Are you ready for that day to come?

Refrain