

# Joel

Minor Prophets—part 2

September 19, 2021

## **DAY 1: National disaster strikes! Joel 1**

1. When great disasters strike, our minds quickly go in three directions:
  - a. Why did this happen? Is this something I brought about?
  - b. What can I do to fix this?
  - c. God, will you fix this?
2. Our usual immediate response is indicative of two very strongly held convictions:
  - a. I must be in control.
  - b. The “good life” is the most important life.
3. Here’s the national disaster in the book of Joel.

*Joel 1:4 What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locust have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten.*

*Joel 1:7 It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white.*

4. There is no food left, no grapes for wine, no fodder for the cattle. It is utter devastation.
5. Joel’s immediate call to the people is to mourn and grieve their incredible loss.

*Joel 1:8 Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the betrothed of her youth. <sup>9</sup> Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD. <sup>10</sup> The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the olive oil fails. <sup>11</sup> Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed.*

6. Then Joel calls for a holy fast, a sacred assembly, to cry out to God.

*Joel 1:14 Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*

*Joel 1:19 To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field.*

7. Joel uses the metaphor of a devastating prairie fire to describe what’s left of the fields after four locust plagues, back-to-back.

8. If being in control and living the good life were really God’s highest priorities for us, locust plagues would never occur. However, they do occur. How does our redemptive God use national disasters to awaken us to things more important than being in control and living the “good life?”

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## **DAY 2: The redemptive nature of the locust plague. Joel 2:1-27**

1. Joel 2 mirrors Joel 1. In Joel 1 the four-fold plague of locusts strikes. In Joel 2 the language changes to that of an army invading the land with equally devastating effects. Is Joel warning the people about a coming invasion of equal devastation?

*Joel 2:1 Blow the trumpet in Zion; **sound the alarm** on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land **tremble**, for **the day of the LORD is coming**. It is close at hand—<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes...*

2. The prophet Joel moves from calling for a time of national mourning and calling out to God (Joel 1), to now consider this a “wake up call.” (Joel 2)

3. Human nature likes to believe there is no real cause and effect in the world. One reason for this is that God doesn’t run around with a mallet bashing us over the head every time we disobey. He is patient with us, and long-suffering. **But because judgment for sin is usually not immediate we assume that it won’t ever come.** Joel says, “Sound the alarm!”

4. The invading army, whether of locusts or soldiers, continues its destruction...

*Joel 2:10 Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.<sup>11</sup> The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. **The day of the LORD** is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?*

5. To this wake-up call, Joel gives us the redemptive application.

*Joel 2:12 “Even now,” declares the LORD, “**return to me with all your heart**, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”<sup>13</sup> **Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD** your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.<sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.*

6. What does repentance look like?

7. What should the people remember about God?

*Joel 2:20 Surely he has done great things!<sup>21</sup> Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things!<sup>22</sup> Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.<sup>23</sup> Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.*

8. Judgment is redemptive. If we will not bow the knee to God through His teaching He will use whatever means necessary to awaken us and get us on the right path.

## **DAY 3: The Day of the Lord**

1. The phrase “the Day of the Lord” has several different meanings depending on context.

a. Meaning #1: divine judgment in this present life.

*Joel 2:1 Blow the trumpet in Zion; **sound the alarm** on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land **tremble**, for **the day of the LORD is coming**. It is close at hand—<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes...*

\* How does Joel describe the “day of the Lord?”

*Joel 2:11 ... **The day of the LORD** is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?*

\* How does Joel describe the “day of the Lord?”

b. Meaning #2: final judgment after this life is over.

*Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the LORD is near** in the valley of decision.*

c. Meaning #3: A day of restoration!

*Joel 2:31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful **day of the LORD**.<sup>32</sup> And **everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved**; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem **there will be deliverance**, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

*Isaiah 11:10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.*

*Luke 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

2. What strikes you about “the Day of the Lord?”

## DAY 4: The Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32)

*Joel 2:28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. <sup>32</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

1. **Prophecies** are sometimes difficult to understand. There are several reasons for this.

a. Is the prophecy just for the people the prophet is talking to, or does also or only have a future meaning beyond the present time of speaking?

b. There is often a double meaning in prophecy. One meaning is a message to the people hearing the prophecy. The second meaning is for future generations of people.

c. Sometimes the prophecy sounds unclear or even obscure. It’s hard to pinpoint just what the prophet means—that is, until the prophecy is fulfilled!

Yet, in this case, we can have a clear meaning of Joel’s prophecy because the prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 2, surrounding Peter’s message of the resurrection of Christ.

2. The promise of the Holy Spirit:

a. The need for God’s Spirit to be one us:

During Old Testament times God was with His people but the Holy Spirit was not given to God’s people the way He was given beginning at Pentecost, in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit inhabits the genuine Christian and provides divine power to overcome our sin nature.

b. The promise of the Holy Spirit to be upon us.

In today’s passage, Joel introduces us to a blessed promise. Anyone can have the abundant privilege of God’s Spirit to be upon him or her.

c. The prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 2.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the one hundred and twenty believers in Jerusalem. They went out into the crowded streets of Jerusalem and witnessed to the resurrection of Christ.

d. When Peter finished preaching, three thousand people were wondrously saved, baptized, and added to the church (Acts 2:37-41)/

3. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## DAY 5: The Valley of Decision (Joel 3)

1. The first two chapters of Joel have to do with God warning His own people about coming judgment. Do not infer that judgment will not come on ungodly people. Joel 3:1-17 has to do with judgment that ungodly people have stored up for themselves (See also Acts 17:30-31)

*Joel 3:1 “In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. <sup>3</sup> They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine to drink.*

*Joel 3:4 ... Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. <sup>5</sup> For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. <sup>m</sup> <sup>6</sup> You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homes.*

2. What strikes you from this passage about judgment?

*Joel 3:9 Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. <sup>10</sup> Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, “I am strong!” <sup>11</sup> Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there.*

3. There is great irony in this passage. God, through Joel, challenges the nations to go to war—with Him! This may sound strange, but consider how often secular man scoffs and laughs at the idea of God even existing. He or she “makes war” against God every day in word and deed. God is simply taking rebellious man up on his never-ending challenge.

4. Secular man hates judgment. Why? He wants to believe he is answerable to no one, not even God.

*Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in **the valley of decision**! For the day of the LORD is near in **the valley of decision**. <sup>15</sup> The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. <sup>16</sup> The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.*

5. The “valley of decision” is not the decision of the sinner whether or not to accept the mercy and grace of God. In this passage, the decision is in the hands of God, to meet out righteous justice, judgment on people for whom judgment is deserved!

6. But the final decision does not have to be judgment for anybody!

*Romans 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?