

Easy-to-Read Version

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Joel

Locusts are grasshoppers that can fly a long distance and travel in huge swarms. At certain times, desert locusts cause terrible damage. They move with wind currents in search of food. Wherever this happens, the result is terrible for the people who live there. After the locusts have done their damage, the land looks like a disaster area after an invasion by an enemy army.

The book of Joel begins with a description of this kind of locust invasion. This may have been an event that the people of Judah had suffered. As God's prophet, Joel explains to the people why it happened. It was because they stopped trusting God and did not follow his ways. That's when God interrupted their lives by bringing the desert locusts to their land.

It is also possible that Joel's description of the locust invasion is a symbol of the way God plans to punish his people. In this case, it serves as a warning of even more serious punishment to come. In fact, the next thing Joel does is warn his people about punishment. Following this warning, Joel tells the people what they should do to avoid God's punishment. He tells them to turn to God and pray for mercy. And Joel expects God to answer their prayer. Joel knew that punishment was not all that God planned for Judah. In fact, it was just the beginning.

Joel then describes a vision of better times to come. He tells what God will do when he answers their prayers. In this new vision, Joel sees

God fighting for his people because of his love for them. In the future, all the nations who harmed Judah will be defeated. And God will bring blessings to Judah that will make up for all they suffered. But Joel also speaks of God's plan to bless all people with his Spirit.

The book of Joel is about how God keeps his promise not only to punish sin, but also to rescue his people.

In the book of Joel, the prophet tells about...

The invasion of locusts that ruined Judah (1:1-20)

The coming day of judgement (2:1-11)

The need to turn to the Lord and pray for mercy (2:12-17)

The Lord's promise to bless Judah and all people who trust in him (2:18-32)

The Lord's promise to punish the enemies of Judah and bless his people (3:1-21)

1 Joel son of Pethuel received this message from the LORD:

Locusts Destroy the Crops

² Listen to this message, you older leaders!

Pay attention, all you people in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your life?

Have you ever heard of it happening before?

³ This is a story to tell your children, and they will tell their children, and your grandchildren will tell the next generation.

⁴ The locusts came and destroyed our crops,

one swarm after another.

After the cutting locusts left,

the swarming locusts came and ate more.

And what the swarming locusts left, the hopping locusts found.

And then the destroying locusts came
and ate everything the others left
behind!

⁵ You drunks, wake up and weep!
Cry, all you who love wine!

You will not have any new wine,
because all the grapes are gone.

⁶ An army of locusts has attacked our
land

with powerful troops, too many to count.
Their teeth are sharp, their jaws are
strong,

like the powerful bite of a lion.

⁷ They have destroyed our grapevines
and ruined our fig trees.

They have stripped off the bark,
and nothing is left on the branches.

⁸ Cry, people, like a young bride
mourning the death of her husband.

⁹ No one has grain or wine for offerings
in the LORD's Temple.

That's why his priests who serve the
LORD there are so sad.

¹⁰ The fields are ruined.

The land is in mourning,
because everything has died:
the grain is destroyed,
the grapes are dried up,
and the olives are dead.

¹¹ Be sad, you farmers!

Cry loudly, you who tend the vines!

Weep for the wheat and barley,
because all the crops are ruined.

¹² The grapevines are dry,
and the fig trees are dying.

All the trees that produce fruit have
died:

pomegranates, dates and apples.

And now the joy of the people is gone
too.

¹³ You priests, put on rags to show your
sorrow.

You who offer the sacrifices, cry loudly.
All you servants of my God, spend the
night in God's Temple wearing rags,

because no one is bringing grain or wine
to offer there.

¹⁴ Tell the people to prepare for a time
of fasting.

Call them together for a special meeting.
Bring together the leaders
and all the people in the land.

Gather at the Temple of the LORD your
God,

and pray to the LORD.

¹⁵ What a terrible day we face,
the day when the LORD will act.

That day is not far off,

when disaster will come from God All-
Powerful.

¹⁶ We have watched our food disappear.
We hear no joyful celebrations at the
Temple of our God.

¹⁷ The seeds we planted in the hard soil
have dried up and died where we put
them.

There are no crops of grain to harvest.
Our barns are empty and falling down.

¹⁸ We hear our cattle bawling from
hunger.

They wander around

looking in vain for grass to eat.

Even the sheep are suffering.

¹⁹ LORD, I am crying out to you for help.
Our grasslands look like they were
burned by fire,

and the trees are scorched as well.

²⁰ The wild animals also need your help.
The streams where water once flowed
are dry.

The grassy plains are burned up.

A Day of Judgement Is Coming

2 Blow the trumpet on Mount Zion.

Sound a warning on my holy
mountain.

Everyone in the land should tremble
with fear.

The LORD's day of judgement is coming
soon.

² It will be a dark, gloomy day,

a day covered with black clouds.
 A huge and powerful army will suddenly
 appear
 like dawn spreading over the mountains.
 There has never been anything like it
 before,
 and there will never be anything like it
 again.

³ The army destroys the land like a burn-
 ing fire.

In front of them the land looks like the
 Garden of Eden.

Behind them it is like an empty desert.
 Nothing escapes them.

⁴ They look like horses,
 and they run like war horses.

⁵ As they come swiftly over the
 mountains,
 they sound like the rumbling of chariots.
 It is like the roar of flames
 burning dry straw.

They are like a powerful army
 gathered for battle.

⁶ People shake with fear and grow pale
 when they see this army advance.

⁷ They charge ahead like soldiers.
 They climb over the walls like warriors.
 They march straight ahead,
 never moving from their path.

⁸ They all move straight ahead,
 never getting in each other's way.
 They break through everything in their
 path.

Nothing can stop them.

⁹ They rush into the city,
 even over the walls.
 They climb into the houses,
 entering through the windows like
 thieves.

¹⁰ As they advance, the earth shakes,
 and the sky trembles.
 The sun and moon grow dark,

and the stars stop shining.

¹¹ The LORD shouts orders to his army.
 His troops are too many to count.
 This army of his is huge,
 and they all obey his commands.
 This is the LORD's day of judgement,
 an amazing and frightful day.
 No one can stand against it.

The Lord Tells the People to Change

¹² This is the LORD's message:
 "Now come back to me with all your
 heart.

Cry and mourn, and don't eat anything!
 Show that you are sad for doing wrong.

¹³ But do more than tear your clothes.
 Tear your hearts."^{*}

Come back to the LORD your God.
 He is kind and merciful.

He does not become angry quickly.
 His great love is sure.

He is always ready to forgive someone
 instead of punishing them.

¹⁴ Who knows? Maybe he will change his
 mind
 and give you a blessing.

Then you will have grain and wine to
 offer
 as sacrifices to the LORD your God.

Pray to the Lord

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet on Mount Zion.
 Tell the people to prepare for a time of
 fasting.

Call them together for a special meeting.

¹⁶ Tell the people to come together,
 prepared to meet before the LORD.
 Bring together the people, old and
 young,

including the babies still nursing.

Don't even leave the newlyweds alone.
 Call them from their bedroom.

^{*}**2:13 Tear your hearts** People in that time tore their clothes to show they were sad or sorry. Here, God wants them to change their hearts.

¹⁷ The priests should stand between the porch[†] and the altar.
 These servants of the LORD should cry and pray,
 “LORD, have mercy on your people.
 Don’t let us be put to shame.
 Don’t let the other nations make fun of us.
 Don’t let them laugh at us and say,
 ‘Where is their God?’”

The Lord Promises Help

¹⁸ Then the LORD showed how much he cared for his land.
 He felt sorry for his people.
¹⁹ This was his answer to their prayers:
 “I will send you grain, wine and oil.
 You will have plenty to eat.
 I will no longer give the other nations any reason to make fun of you.
²⁰ I will force the army from the north to leave your land.
 I will chase them into the dry, empty desert.
 Those in front will go east into the Dead Sea,
 and those at the back will drown in the western sea.[‡]
 An awful smell will rise from their rotting bodies
 because they have done such terrible things!”

The Lord Will Bless the Land

²¹ Land, don’t be afraid.
 Be happy and full of joy
 because the LORD has done such great things.
²² Animals, don’t be afraid.
 The open pastures are green with grass.
 The trees are full of fruit.

There are more figs and grapes than ever before.

²³ Be happy, people of Zion,
 and celebrate what the LORD your God has done!

He shows he has made everything right by sending you rain at the right time.
 Once again he is sending you all the rain you need in every season.

²⁴ The threshing floors will be filled with grain,
 and the storage pits will overflow with wine and olive oil.

The Lord Speaks

²⁵ “I, the Lord, sent my great army against you.

The swarming and hopping locusts and the destroying and cutting locusts[¶] ate everything you had.

But I will pay you back for those years of trouble.

²⁶ You will have plenty of food.

You will eat all you want.

And you will praise the name of the LORD your God

for the wonderful things he has done.

My people will never again be put to shame.

²⁷ You will know that I am with Israel.

You will know that I am the LORD your God.

There is no other God.

My people will never again be put to shame.

God Will Give His Spirit to All People

²⁸ “After all of this, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
 your old men will have special dreams,
 and your young men will see visions.

[†]2:17 *porch* An open area in front of the Temple.

[‡]2:20 *the western sea* That is, the Mediterranean Sea.

[¶]2:25 *swarming ... cutting locusts* See Joel 1:4.

²⁹In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, both men and women.

³⁰I will work wonders in the sky and on the earth.

There will be blood, fire and thick smoke.

³¹The sun will become dark, and the moon as red as blood, just before the great and terrible day that the LORD comes!

³²And the LORD will save everyone who calls out to him for help.

Yes, some on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem will escape,

as the LORD has said.

Those left alive will be the ones the LORD has called.

Judah's Enemies Will Be Punished

3 “At the time those things happen, I will bring back a time of blessing to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

²I will also gather all the other nations and bring them to Judgement[§] Valley.

There I will judge them

for what they did to Israel, my own people.

Those nations scattered my people among other nations.

They divided up my land.

³They threw lots for my people to see who would own them.

They sold boys to pay for a prostitute and girls to buy wine to drink.

⁴“You people in Tyre and Sidon and cities of Philistia, do you have a problem with me? Are you trying to punish me for something I did? If so, be ready! Whatever you try to do to me I will immediately make happen to you! ⁵You

took my silver and gold. You took my precious treasures and put them in your temples. ⁶You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, who took them far from their land.

⁷“But I will bring them back from all the places where you sold them as slaves. And I will punish you for what you did. ⁸I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah. Then they will sell them to the faraway Sabceans.”**

This is what the LORD said.

Prepare for War

⁹Announce this to the other nations:

“Prepare for war!

Call out your troops!

Tell your fighting men to line up and be ready to attack.

¹⁰Beat your ploughs into swords.

Make spears from your trimming tools.

Even the weakest man must say, ‘I am a mighty warrior.’

¹¹All you nations, hurry!

Come together in one place.”

Now, LORD, send down your mighty army.

¹²“Wake up, nations!

Come to Judgement Valley.

There I, the LORD, will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

¹³It is harvest time,^{††}

so bring the sickle to cut down the grain.

Come, trample the grapes, because the winepress is full.

The storage pits overflow with their great evil.”

¹⁴Huge crowds of people now fill this valley of decision,^{‡‡}

[§]3:2 **Judgement** Literally, “Jehoshaphat”, a name that means “The LORD judges.” Also in verse 12.

3:8 **Sabceans People who lived in the southern part of the Arabian Desert.

††3:13 **harvest time** This time of judgement and punishment is compared to cutting down grain for harvest and pressing the juice from grapes for making wine.

‡‡3:14 **valley of decision** A description of “Judgement Valley”.

and the LORD's day of judgement will soon be here.

¹⁵The sun and the moon will become dark.

The stars will stop shining.

¹⁶The LORD will shout from Zion.

He will shout from Jerusalem, and the earth and sky will shake.

But the LORD is a shelter his people can run to,

a strong place of safety for the people of Israel.

God Will Bless His People

¹⁷“Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.

I live on Zion, my holy mountain.

Jerusalem will be a holy place, free from the invasion of foreigners.

¹⁸When that time comes, you will have wine from vineyards covering your mountains,

and milk from livestock grazing all over your hills.

The dry riverbeds in Judah will fill with water.

A stream will flow from my Temple, watering the Valley of Acacia Trees.

¹⁹But Egypt will be a desert and Edom an empty wilderness, because they were cruel to the people of Judah.

They killed innocent people there.

²⁰“But there will always be people living in Judah,

and people will live in Jerusalem from now on.

²¹I will always defend those who are innocent

and punish those who are guilty!

I am the LORD who lives in Zion!”