

## Historical Context

- **Joel** means “Yahweh is God.”
- Few clues to the precise dating and setting of this prophetic book Dates range from 900 B.C. to the post-exilic period.
  - Post-exilic period seems most likely

- **Reference to Captivity**

- **Joel 3:1-3**

- “For behold, in those days and at that time When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance, **Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations;** And they have divided up My land. <sup>3</sup>“They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

- **The Fact that the Temple is Standing & Operational precludes 586-516 B.C. (see 1:9, 13-14,16; 2:17)**

## Locust Plague or Invading Army?

1:1-7	2:2-11
<p><b>1</b> The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Hear this, O elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has <i>anything like</i> this happened in your days Or in your fathers’ days?</p> <p><sup>3</sup>Tell your sons about it, And <i>let</i> your sons <i>tell</i> their sons, And their sons the next generation.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>Awake, drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you wine drinkers, On account of the sweet wine</p>	<p>A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been <i>anything</i> like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.</p>

That is cut off from your mouth.  
<sup>6</sup>For a nation has invaded my land,  
 Mighty and without number;  
 Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,  
 And it has the fangs of a lioness.  
<sup>7</sup>It has made my vine a waste  
 And my fig tree splinters.  
 It has stripped them bare and  
 cast *them* away;  
 Their branches have become white.

<sup>7</sup>They run like mighty men,  
 They climb the wall like soldiers;  
 And they each march in line,  
 Nor do they deviate from their paths.  
<sup>8</sup>They do not crowd each other,  
 They march everyone in his path;  
 When they burst through the defenses,  
 They do not break ranks.  
<sup>9</sup>They rush on the city,  
 They run on the wall;  
 They climb into the houses,  
 They enter through the windows like a thief.  
<sup>10</sup>Before them the earth quakes,  
 The heavens tremble,  
 The sun and the moon grow dark  
 And the stars lose their brightness.  
<sup>11</sup>The Lord utters His voice before His army;  
 Surely His camp is very great,  
 For strong is he who carries out His word.  
 The day of the Lord is indeed great and very  
 awesome,  
 And who can endure it?

- **Human armies have been metaphorically compared to locusts in other biblical texts (Judges 6:5; 7:12; Jer. 46:23; 51:14)**
- **However, the verbiage used and the focus on the destruction of crops and food shortages suggests an actual invasion of locusts.**
  - **This would be in line with the covenant curses Moses had shared with the people before entering the promised land if they disobeyed:**

**Deuteronomy 28:38-42**

<sup>38</sup>“You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it. <sup>39</sup>You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather *the grapes*, for the worm will devour them. <sup>40</sup>You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off. <sup>41</sup>You shall have sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity. <sup>42</sup>The cricket shall possess all your trees and the produce of your ground.

- **The Locusts themselves are described as an army.**

**Proverbs 30:27** The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks...

*The Destructive Power of Locust Invasions* The following from National Geographic reflects the devastating effects of a locust invasion and explains how these insects continue to provide an ongoing problem for agricultural production in the Middle East today: The desert locust is notorious. Found in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, they inhabit some 60 countries and can cover one-fifth of Earth's land surface. Desert locust plagues may threaten the economic livelihood of one-tenth of the world's humans. A desert locust swarm can be 460 square miles (1,200 square kilometers) in size and pack between 40 and 80 million locusts into less than half a square mile (one square kilometer).

Each locust can eat its weight in plants each day, so a swarm of such size would eat 423 million pounds (192 million kilograms) of plants every day. Like the individual animals within them, locust swarms are typically in motion and can cover vast distances. In 1954, a swarm flew from northwest Africa to Great Britain. In 1988, another made the lengthy trek from West Africa to the Caribbean.\*

- National Geographic

## Structure & Outline

- I. **Call to Repentance (1:1-2:17)**
  - a. Focus on the past judgment of the locust plague (1:1-14)
  - b. Focus on the potential coming judgment (2:1-17)
- II. **If the People Repent God Will Restore and Bless (2:18-3:21)**
  - a. Promise for the near future of restoration & Blessing (2:18-27)
  - b. Promise for the distant future of restoration & blessing (2:18-3:21)

## The Day of the Lord

- Judgment (1:15; 2:1; 2:11)
- Restoration & Blessing (2:31; 3:14; 3:18)

# Major Themes, Message, & Application

## 1. Obedience

### Deuteronomy 30:15

“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity.

- The Spiritual Principle of Sowing and Reaping

### Galatians 6:7-9

<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

## 2. God’s Mercy and Response to Genuine Repentance

- “Rend Your Hearts, Not Your Garments”

### Joel 2:13

And rend your heart and not your garments.”  
Now return to the Lord your God,  
For He is gracious and compassionate,  
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness  
And relenting of evil.

Quoted from **Exodus 34:6-7**

<sup>6</sup>Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup>who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished...”

- **The Lord ALWAYS Responds to True Repentance**

### Joel 2:30-32

“I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,  
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

<sup>31</sup>“The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood

Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

<sup>32</sup>“**And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered;**

### 3. The Promise of the Holy Spirit

#### Joel 2:28-32

“It will come about after this  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
Your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> “Even on the male and female servants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.  
<sup>30</sup> “I will display wonders in the sky and on the  
earth,  
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.  
<sup>31</sup> “The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood  
Before the great and awesome day of  
the Lord comes.  
<sup>32</sup> “And it will come about that whoever calls on  
the name of the Lord  
Will be delivered;  
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
There will be those who escape,  
As the Lord has said,  
Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

#### Acts 2:16-21, 37-39

‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says,  
‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on  
all mankind;  
And your sons and your daughters shall  
prophesy,  
And your young men shall see visions,  
And your old men shall dream dreams;  
<sup>18</sup> Even on My bondslaves, both men and  
women,  
I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit  
And they shall prophesy.  
<sup>19</sup> ‘And I will grant wonders in the sky above  
And signs on the earth below,  
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.  
<sup>20</sup> ‘The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood,  
Before the great and glorious day of the Lord  
shall come.  
<sup>21</sup> ‘And it shall be that everyone who calls on the  
name of the Lord will be saved.’

<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced  
to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of  
the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we  
do?” <sup>38</sup> Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of  
you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for  
the forgiveness of your sins; and you will  
receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the  
promise is for you and your children and for all  
who are far off, as many as the Lord our God  
will call to Himself.”

### Other Prophets Looking to the Day of the Outpouring of the Spirit

#### Ezekiel 36:25-27

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all  
your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit  
within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I  
will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe  
My ordinances.

See also (Isaiah 44:3; 59:21; Ezekiel 37:14; 39:29; John 7:37-39; Romans 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)