

(98) Adult Sunday School Class
Joel, chpts. 1-3
Prophets, pp. 429-438



The prophet Joel packs a lot into this small book with just three chapters. Not much is known about the prophet nor when the book was written. The life and message of Joel are not tied to any kings, and the book does not mention any specific historical event.

The mention of no king, in combination with the reference to priests and elders weeping in the Temple (2:16-17), have led some scholars to take a more literal reading and believe this period to be after the post-exilic Temple was rebuilt (515 BC). Other scholars take a more figurative approach and believe the locust plagues that Joel describes (particularly 2:1-11) predict a foreign army invasion, not of locust, but either the Assyrians in 722 BC or the Babylonians in 586 BC.

Unlike most of the other prophets, Joel skips the list of the Covenant violations (idolatry, social injustice, religious rituals, etc.) and goes straight to judgment. Joel describes a terrible “locust” plague (regardless if taken literally or figuratively) that is to come on the land as God’s judgment for rejecting and abandoning His laws. *Joel calls on the people to repent and to turn to God with sincere hearts*, and then explains the loving character of God to be gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, One who relents sending calamity (2:13).

Like the other prophets, Joel also moves beyond the coming judgment to describe a future time of wonderful restoration when God will pour out His Spirit on all His people (in Acts 2:16-21, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 to explain the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost).

The prophet Joel provides a reminder to everyone, then and now, that sin is very serious, and God’s wrath and judgment are also a reality that no one should ignore. The good news is that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (2:32). In Romans 10:13, the apostle Paul quotes this verse when teaching about justification.