

The Lord Dwells in Zion

Joel

Last week we looked at Ezekiel and we have already talked about Isaiah. Soon, we'll walk through Daniel but today we are returning to another minor prophet whose book you will soon read. In the process, we have discovered there are no 'minor' prophets. Their books may be small, as is with Joel, but their messages are of equal importance to the books we call 'the major prophets.'

There are some things that are unique about Joel as a book.

- We don't know when it was written (It could be after the exile meaning at the same time as Ezra-Nehemiah because he mentions Jerusalem and the Temple but no kings)
- He is probably a later writer because he quotes from a multitude of other OT books: Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah and Malachi)
- Joel, unlike the pre-exilic prophets, doesn't accuse Israel of any specific sin even though he does say that God is going to judge Israel

Reflecting on the OT provided Joel with an understanding of what was happening in his day, but it also provided him hope for the future.

Hopefully, studying these OT prophets has done the same for you. We now understand that

- God gives leaders to the people who reflect their hearts but in response to that ungodly leadership, God judges his people, in effect, judging the hearts of all of the people even though he may call out the leaders.
- God's judgements are intended to disciple his people to godliness. In this, I hope you have not wasted your pandemic but have, in fact, grown spiritually in such a way that your spiritual life is permanently changed by the events of this year.

Don't waste your pandemic!

THEME: Joel's theme is "the day of the Lord" and it speaks to any time in the past when God appeared to save his people – think the Exodus plagues and the Red Sea.

But...Joel and the prophets also use this term to look forward to a time when God will once again confront and defeat evil and save his people.

First: The Past Day of the Lord. 1

1 - A locust swarm has devastated Israel much like the 8th plague, the swarm of locusts that God used to save Israel from Egypt.

2 – Joel calls on the leaders of Israel to repent. 1:13-14

Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴ Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

3 – Joel repents. 2:19

2:19 - *To you, O LORD, I call.*

Second: The Future Day of the Lord. 2

1 - Another plague of locusts is coming...but these locusts aren't animals. They are an army from the north (2:20) that, like locusts, will destroy everything in their path.

2:1-10

It is, according to Joel, a dark and terrible day he sums up by saying....

2:11c - *For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?*

2 – Joel once more calls on the people to repent 12-17

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

a) How we should repent

Repentance is

- a) a change of heart that leads to
- b) a change of mind and
- c) behavior.

But Joel has read the book of Isaiah and he knows that worship and repentance can be a show and not sincere.

Isaiah 29:11-13 - *And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." ¹² And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." ¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me..."*

For Joel – as it should be for us, **the key is vs 13a** - *rend your hearts and not your garments*

- b) Why should we repent – (a quote from Ex 34:6 when God forgave Israel after the golden calf incident)

V 13b - *for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.*

3 – He calls on the leaders to lead the people in repentance. 17

Third: God's Response to Israel's Repentance. 2:18-27

God's response can be summed up in v 18 – *"Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people."*

- a) 20-21 – Defeat the invaders
- b) 22-26 – Restore Israel's the land
- c) 27 – Be present among his people

V 27 - *You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.*

This far, Joel has shown Israel that their sin produced the disaster they face but there is always hope with their merciful God

But Joel, as with many of the other prophets, sees the future in the past. There is coming another 'Day of the Lord.'

Fourth: The Future Day of the Lord. 2c-3

(This mirrors God's response in chapter 2)

1 – 2:28-32 – The day is coming when God's Spirit will not just fill the Temple but all of God's people

2:28-29 - *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

Joel borrows Isaiah 32:15 & 44:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:23-28

Peter - **Acts 2:16 - this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel**

Paul – 2:32 – **Romans 10:13 – For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

IMP: We may not know everything about the various fulfilments of Joel's prophecies, but we do know that Romans 10:13 is true for now and always!

IMP: You want to know about 2:30-32. Read this –
https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/40/40-1/40-1-pp013-026_JETS.pdf

2 – 3:1-16 – God will confront and destroy evil in all the nations

Joel borrows from Isaiah 13, Zephaniah 3 and Ezekiel 38-29

13 -16 – *Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. ¹⁶ The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.*

3 – 3:17-22 – The renewal of all creation

Joel borrows from Isaiah 35, Ezekiel 47 & Zechariah 14; after the final day of judgement, the whole earth will be renewed.

How is anyone going to stop this?" – Psalm 2:4 - *He who sits in the heavens laughs*

And again, just like in Ezekiel 48:35, the most important part of this prophecy is God's presence

Ezekiel 48:35 - *And the name of the city from that time on shall be, 'The LORD Is There.'*

Joel 3:21 – *"...for the Lord dwells in Zion."*

3:18 - *And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD*

God's presence, like a river, will flow out from the Temple and bring about global renewal, transforming the earth into a new Eden.

- Conclusion:**
- 1 – Sin wreaks destruction
 - 2 – God's mercy is greater than our sin
 - 3 – God's plan to reconcile all things is coming to pass
 - 4 – You are representative of God and his redeeming work

Until God brings it all to pass; here are our marching orders –

1:2-3 - Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? ³ Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation. In fact, tell everyone you know!

Community Groups:

- 1 – How are you doing?
- 2 – How have you seen God move in your life since Covid-19 began?
- 3 – What are your major concerns right now?
- 4 – What can our CG do to encourage each other?
- 5 – What is Joel's theme?
- 6 – What does it mean?
- 7 – What happened on the 'day of the Lord' that Joel references?
- 8 – What is Joel's response to the devastation?
- 9 – What is repentance?
- 10 – What does insincere or false repentance look like?
- 11 – Discuss a time in your life when God convicted you of a particular sin and you repented? What did your repentance look like? What was the result?
- 12 – In chapter 2, what 3 things does God promise to do in response to Israel's repentance?
- 13 – On the day of Pentecost, how does Peter use Joel's prophecy?
- 14 – How does the apostle Paul use Joel's prophecy?

15 – From the pastor’s perspective, what is the most important part about Joel’s prophecy (3:21)?

16 – Why is God’s presence so important and such a blessing?

17 – What are you going to do with what Joel has said?