

Joel's Prophecy to Judah (c. 830 BC)

Joel 1–3

Judah Devastated by an Invasion of Locusts

1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

- 2 Hear this, O elders,
And listen, all inhabitants of the land.
Has *anything like* this happened in your days
Or in your fathers' days?
- 3 Tell your sons about it,
And *let* your sons *tell* their sons,
And their sons the next generation.
- 4 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.
- 5 Awake, drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you wine drinkers,
On account of the sweet wine
That is cut off from your mouth.
- 6 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.
- 7 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.
- 8 Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth
For the bridegroom of her youth.
- 9 The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off
From the house of the LORD.
The priests mourn,
The ministers of the LORD.
- 10 The field is ruined,
The land mourns;
For the grain is ruined,
The new wine dries up,
Fresh oil fails.
- 11 Be ashamed, O farmers,
Wail, O vinedressers,
For the wheat and the barley;
Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.
- 12 The vine dries up
And the fig tree fails;
The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,
All the trees of the field dry up.
Indeed, rejoicing dries up
From the sons of men.

- 13 Gird yourselves *with sackcloth*
And lament, O priests;
Wail, O ministers of the altar!
Come, spend the night in sackcloth
O ministers of my God,
For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God.
- 14 Consecrate a fast,
Proclaim 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.
- 15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is near,
And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.
- 16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes,
Gladness and joy from the house of our God?
- 17 The seeds shrivel under their clods;
The storehouses are desolate,
The barns are torn down,
For the grain is dried up.
- 18 How the beasts groan!
The herds of cattle wander aimlessly
Because there is no pasture for them;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer.
- 19 To You, O LORD, I cry;
For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness
And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.
- 20 Even the beasts of the field pant for You;
For the water brooks are dried up
And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

The Coming “Day of the LORD”

- 2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,
- 2 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 *anything* like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.
- 3 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.
- 4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like war horses, so they run.
- 5 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.
- 6 Before them the people are in anguish;
All faces turn pale.
- 7 They run like mighty men,
They climb the wall like soldiers;
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.
- 8 They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path;
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.
- 9 They rush on the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.
- 10 Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
- 11 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?

A Call to Repentance

- 12 “Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;
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.
- 14 Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent
And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?
- 15 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,
16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,

Gather the children and the nursing infants.

Let the bridegroom come out of his room

And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

- 17 Let the priests, the LORD's ministers,
Weep between the porch and the altar,
And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,
A byword among the nations.
Why should they among the peoples say,
'Where is their God?'"

The LORD Has Mercy on Israel

- 18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land
And will have pity on His people.
- 19 The LORD will answer and say to His people,
"Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied *in full* with them;
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.
- 20 "But I will remove the northern *army* far from you,
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
And its rear guard into the western sea.
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,
For it has done great things."
- 21 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the LORD has done great things.
- 22 Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.
- 23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for *your* vindication.
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.
- 24 The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.
- 25 "Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.
- 26 "You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
Then My people will never be put to shame.
- 27 "Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am the LORD your God,
And there is no other;
And My people will never be put to shame.

The LORD Will Pour Out His Spirit

- 28 “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.
- 29 “Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
- 30 “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.
- 31 “The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
- 32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Will be delivered; [[Rom 10:13](#)]
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape, [[Obad 1:17](#)]
As the LORD has said,
Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. [[Acts 2:17–21](#)]

The LORD Judges the Nations

- 3:1 “For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
2 I will gather all the nations
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. [[Zech 14:4](#)]
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.
- 3 “They have also cast lots for My people,
Traded a boy for a harlot
And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.
- 4 “Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head.
- 5 “Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples,
6 and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,
7 behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head.
- 8 “Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation,” for the LORD has spoken.
- 9 Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!
Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!
- 10 Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, “I am a mighty man.”

- 11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,
And gather yourselves there.
Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones.
- 12 Let the nations be aroused
And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,
For there I will sit to judge
All the surrounding nations.
- 13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. [[Rev 14:15](#)]
- 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 moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
- 16 The LORD roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But the LORD is a refuge for His people
And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

The Glorious Future of Judah

- 17 Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
So Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers will pass through it no more.
- 18 And in that day
The mountains will drip with sweet wine,
And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD
To water the valley of Shittim.
- 19 Egypt will become a waste,
And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,
In whose land they have shed innocent blood.
- 20 But Judah will be inhabited forever
And Jerusalem for all generations.
- 21 And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,
For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Chronological Notes

1) The date of Joel.¹

A) Early pre-exilic date.²

(1) During the reign of King Jehoshaphat (873t–849t BC), or his grandson, King Joash (836t–797t BC).

(2) Arguments in favor of this period include the position of Joel in the Hebrew canon; it appears among other prophetic writings of this period. Also, the enemies of Israel that Joel named (Tyre, Sidon, Philistia [cf. 2 Chron. 21:16–17], Egypt [cf. 1 Kings 14:25–26], and Edom [cf. 2 Kings 8:20–22]; 3:2–7, 19) were enemies of Israel during this time. The prominence Joel gave to Judah’s priests and elders rather than to her king—Joash was a boy king under the influence of Jehoiada, the high priest, early in his reign—is a further argument for this view.

B) Middle pre-exilic date.³

(1) During the reign of Joash’s grandson, King Uzziah (791t–740t BC).

(2) Supporters of this view also claim the first two arguments cited in favor of the early pre-exilic view above. They argue, in addition, that the absence of references to Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia make a later date, when these nations were the major ancient Near Eastern superpowers, unlikely. Joel’s reference to Greece in 3:6 may fit this period since the Ionian Greeks were at this time expanding their commercial influence in Asia Minor. Joel’s reference to the Sabeans in 3:8 is appropriate for this period as well. Internal references and linguistic characteristics may also reflect Uzziah’s times, and are similar to the writings of the other eighth-century prophets (i.e., Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah).

C) Late pre-exilic date.⁴

(1) Between 597 and 587 BC.

(2) Statements in Joel could fit this period, and some of his statements are similar to those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and may reflect conditions before the destruction of Jerusalem. If true, Joel would have been a contemporary of Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Yet Joel 2:18–19 seems to imply that God had been merciful to Joel’s generation, suggesting that the people had repented, but there is no record of this happening during this period.

¹ Sourced from Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Joel,” Online: <http://www.soniclight.com>.

² Advocates of this view include Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 148; Gleason A. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 305; E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 271–72; C. F. Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 1:169–70; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 188; Charles H. Dyer, *The Old Testament Explorer*, 737; Warren W. Wiersbe, “Joel,” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*, 333; and Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, 268.

³ Advocates include Richard D. Patterson, “Joel,” in *Daniel–Malachi*, vol. 7 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 231–33.

⁴ Advocates include Wilhelm Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona*, 14–15; and Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, 154–58.

D) Post-exilic date.⁵

- (1) Between 515 and 500 BC, or even as late as sometime in the 400s BC.
- (2) Interpreters who see Joel 3:1–2 and 17 as references to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity take the references to the temple in 1:9, 13 and 2:17 as applying to the second temple (completed in 515 BC). Yet all these texts could apply to earlier periods. Generally, scholars who view apocalyptic writing as a late development in Judaism tend to date Joel quite late.

E) The wide variety of views on the dating of Joel demonstrate how difficult it is to date.⁶ I have opted to present Joel within the reign of King Joash (c. 830 BC).

⁵ Advocates include Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Joel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1410; idem, “A Theology of the Minor Prophets,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, 387; idem, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 368; Raymond B. Dillard, “Joel,” in *The Minor Prophets*, 240–42 (though see 301–2); David A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 27; and John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 417.

⁶ For an excellent examination of all the evidences used in dating Joel, see Duane A. Garrett, “Hosea Joel,” *NAC*, 287–294. He concludes: “In summary, clear pointers to the date of Joel are few and far between.”