

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

by Myer Pearlman

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Joel

Theme: The occasion for Joel's prophecy was an unusually severe invasion of destructive insects - locusts - which devastated the land, destroying the harvests, and bringing on a general famine.

The prophet sees in this calamity a visitation from GOD and refers to it as a type of the final world-judgment - the day of the Lord (1:15). Like many of the other prophets, Joel predicts the future in the light of the present, regarding a present and imminent event as a type of a future event. Therefore he sees in the invasion of the locusts a foreshadowing of the coming invasion of the Assyrian army (Ch. 2:1-27; compare Isaiah Chs. 36, 37).

Looking still farther into the future he sees the invasion by the locusts and Assyrians as typical of the final invasion of Palestine by the confederated armies of Antichrist. Taking the "**Day of the Lord**" as the central thought, and remembering that the same expression is used as referring to the invasion of the locusts and the Assyrians, we shall sum up the theme of Joel as follows: The Day of the Lord, seen as immediate (in the invasion of the locusts), as imminent (in the coming Assyrian invasion), and as future (in the final invasion).

Author: Little is known concerning Joel. It is believed that he prophesied during the time of Joash, king of Judah (II Kings, Ch. 12).

CONTENTS:

- I. The day of the Lord seen as immediate: the Invasion of the locusts (Ch. 1).
- II. The day of the Lord seen as imminent: the Assyrian invasion (2:1-27).
- III. The day of the Lord seen as future: the final invasion (2:28 to 3:21).

The first section (Ch. 1) describes the literal plague of locusts. The terribleness of the plague may be Judged of by the following description of the locusts: "The land over which their devastating hordes have passed at once assumes the appearance of sterility and dearth. Well did the Romans call them 'the burners of the land' which is the literal meaning of the word 'locust.'

On they move, covering the ground so completely as to hide it from sight, and in such numbers that it often takes three or four days for the mighty host to pass by.

When seen at a distance this swarm of advancing locusts resembles a cloud of dust or sand, reaching a few feet above the ground as the myriads of insects leap forward. The only thing that momentarily arrests their attention is a sudden change of weather, for cold benumbs them while it lasts. They also keep quiet at night swarming like bees on the bushes and hedges until the morning sun warms and revives them and enables them to proceed on their devastating march.

They **'have no king'** nor leader, yet they falter not, but press on in serried ranks, urged in the same direction by an irresistible impulse and turn neither to the right nor to the left for any sort of obstacle.

When a wall or house lies in their way, they climb straight up, going over the roof to the other side and blindly rush in at open doors and windows. When they come to water be it a puddle or river, a lake or an open sea, they never attempt to go round it, but unhesitatingly leap in and are drowned; and their dead bodies floating on the surface form a bridge for their companions to pass over. The scourge thus often comes to an end, but it as often happens that the decomposition of millions of insects produces pestilence and death." -Van Lennep.

The contents of the second section may be summed up as follows:

1. The invasion of the Assyrians typified by the locust invasion (2:1-11). The Assyrians were like locusts because of their number and destructive influence.
2. A call to repentance (2:12-17).
3. A promise of deliverance (2:18-27).

In chapters 2:28 to 3:21 the prophet projects his vision into the time of the end, and he sees:

1. The outpouring of the Spirit upon the Jewish nation (2:28, 29). This prophecy had a partial fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost.
2. The signs preceding the Lord's coming (2:30-32).
3. Armageddon and the judgment of the nations (3:1-16).
4. The restoration of Israel (vv. 17-21).

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