

1 **Sound the alarm**

Joel 2:1-11

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Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh is coming —it is indeed near. A day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thick darkness, like the dawn spreads on the mountains, a great and strong army! There has been nothing like it from old, and after it nothing will be again for generations to come. Before them a fire devours, and behind them a flame burns. Like the garden of Eden is the land before them, and after them it is like a desolate desert, and nothing can escape them. Like the appearance of horses is their appearance, and like horsemen they run; like the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains, they leap about; like the sound of a flame of fire devouring stubble; like a strong army arranged in rows for battle.

3 **Joel 2:1-11 (continued)**

From before them nations writhe, all faces turn pale. They run like mighty warriors, they scale the wall like men of war; each goes on its own way, and they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another; each goes on its own trail; and through the falling weapons, they are not halted. In the city they rush forth; on the walls they run. Into the houses they climb up; through the windows they enter like a thief. Before them the earth quakes; the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars have withheld their splendor. And Yahweh utters his voice before his army, because his encampment is very large; strong is the one who carries out his decree, for great is the day of Yahweh and exceedingly fearful. Who can endure it? (Joel 2:1–11, LEB)

4 **The locust plague**

◆The calamity to which the prophet has thus emphatically directed his hearers' attention: a visitation of locusts, repeated for more years than one (2:25), and of unexampled severity; what had escaped the ravages of one swarm, had been speedily devoured by a succeeding one, till the crops were completely ruined, and every chance both of harvest and vintage had been utterly destroyed.

◆*That which the shearer (gāzām) hath left, the swarmer (arbeh) hath eaten;*

◆*And that which the swarmer (arbeh) hath left, the lapper (yélek) hath eaten;*

◆*And that which the lapper (yélek) hath left, the finisher (hāsīl) hath eaten.*

5 **Complete destruction**

6 **A continual judgment**

◆The different types of locusts and the different lifecycle stages of the locust mean that this was pretty much a year-round destruction.

◆All classes of people were affected by this judgment.

◆Deprived of luxuries (Joel 1:5-7)

◆Their worship interrupted (Joel 1:8-10)

◆Left them destitute of substance (Joel 1:11-12)

7 **A call to mourning**

◆Drunkards should mourn (1:5-7) because there will be no more wine.

◆The land should mourn (1:8-10) because it will not be fruitful (just a betrothed woman whose husband dies before the marriage begins)

◆The farmers should mourn (1:11-12) because their labors are destroyed

◇The priests should mourn (1:13) because the resources for daily offerings were no longer available

8 **A call to repent**

- ◇The nation was told to call a sacred assembly for all the people to fast and to cry out to the Lord.
 - ◇Inner repentance
 - ◇Accompanied by outward act (Joel 2:12-17)

9 **The significance of the locusts and drought**

- ◇A harbinger of the coming judgment of the Lord
 - ◇*Sadday = Almighty; sod = destruction*
 - ◇Egypt's locust plague preceded the final plagues of darkness
- ◇Deuteronomy said locust plagues were part of the curses that came upon those who ignored God's law
 - ◇*You shall carry out much seed to the field, but you shall gather little produce, for the locust shall devour it.* (Deuteronomy 28:38, LEB)
 - ◇*All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.* (Deuteronomy 28:42, KJV 1900)
- ◇Efforts of men were useless. Farmers dug into the ground to find ungerminated seeds (1:16-17)

10 **Overwhelming destruction**

- ◇Modern travelers speak often of the literally incalculable numbers in which locusts come. Thus an observer in South Africa writes, "For the space of 10 miles on each side of the Sea-Cow river, and 80–90 miles in breadth, an area of 16–1800 square miles, the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them: the water of the river was scarcely visible on account of the dead carcasses which floated on the surface, drowned in the attempt to come at the weeds which grew in it."
- ◇Again, in Cyprus, "the locusts lay swarming above a foot deep in several parts of the high road, and thousands were destroyed by the wheels of the carriage driving over them."

11 **Overwhelming destruction, part 2**

- ◇A writer in *Nature* (1889, p. 153) states "that a flight of locusts that passed over the Red Sea in Nov. 1889, was 2000 square miles in extent," and upon the assumption that it was 48 miles square, half a mile deep, and contained 144 locusts, each weighing 16 oz., to a cubic foot, he calculated that it contained 24,420 billions of insects, and weighed 42,850 millions of tons.
- ◇A second similar, perhaps even larger flight, was seen passing in the same direction the next day. In Cyprus in 1881, up to the end of October, 1,600,000,000 egg-cases had that season been collected and destroyed, each case containing a considerable number of eggs. By the end of the season over 1300 tons of eggs had been collected; and yet not less than 5,076,000,000 egg-cases were, it is believed, deposited in the island two years afterwards" (Cambridge Nat. Hist. V. 292).

12 **Sound the Alarm!**

13 **The duty of the watchman**

- ◇A watchman on a city wall had the duty to blow a trumpet to alert the people to great danger
 - ◇*Son of man, speak to your people, and you must say to them, 'A land, if I bring over it a sword and the people of the land take a man, one from their number, and they appoint him for them as a watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land, and he blows on the horn and he warns the people, and anyone who listens hears the sound of the horn and he does not take warning and the sword comes and it takes him, his blood will be on his own head. For he heard the sound of the horn and he did not take warning; his blood will be on him. But if he took warning, he saved his life. And as for the watchman, if he sees the sword coming and he does not*

blow the horn, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and it takes their lives, he will be taken through his guilt, but his blood from the hand of the watchman I will seek.' (Ezekiel 33:2-6, LEB)



14 **The appropriate response**

- ◇ *Or is a horn blown in a city and people are not afraid? Or does a disaster occur in the city and Yahweh has not done it? (Amos 3:6, LEB)*
- ◇ The appropriate response to the sounding of alarm was to tremble in fear and then prepare for battle. This response is especially appropriate since the day of the Lord was coming.
- ◇

15 **The day of the Lord is a day of darkness and gloom**

- ◇ For those who are the objects of God's judgment, the day of the Lord is described as a day of darkness and gloom and of clouds in blackness. This refers to the intense darkness that followed the locust plague in Exodus 10 where the same order of events appears.
- ◇ Darkness is often associated with God's role as warrior
 - ◇ *And so you came near, and you stood under the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of the heaven, dark with a very thick cloud. (Deuteronomy 4:11, LEB)*
 - ◇ *So he bowed the heavens and came down with a thick cloud under his feet. (Psalm 18:9, LEB)*
 - ◇ *Cloud and thick darkness are surrounding him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. (Psalm 97:2, LEB)*
- ◇
- ◇

16 **Who is this approaching army?**

- ◇ Some think that this passage refers to a coming attack on God's people from the Assyrians or Babylonians. Others think that it is an eschatological prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled. Either way, there are certain characteristics that are true of the coming attack.
 - ◇ It is an overwhelming force. The heads of locusts and horses are similar in appearance. The German and Italian words for locust literally mean "hay horse".
 - ◇ The enemy comes swiftly.
 - ◇ The enemy comes noisily.
 - ◇ It is full of anguish (like a woman struggling in a problematic labor)
 - ◇ It is relentless – plunging through every defense
 - ◇ The enemy is invincible

17 **The relentless attack**

- ◇ *They run like mighty warriors, they scale the wall like men of war; each goes on its own way, and they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another; each goes on its own trail; and through the falling weapons, they are not halted. (Joel 2:7-8, LEB)*
 - ◇ They enter walled cities and homes
- ◇

18 **The invincibility of the Lord's army**

- ◇ *Before them the earth quakes; the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars have withheld their splendor (Joel 2:10, LEB)*
 - ◇ There are accounts of locust invasions where the cloud of locust was so thick as to darken the sky.

- ◇ Other accounts talk about the earth trembling as locust march in unison with one another.
- ◇ The coming judgment of the Lord will be so significant as to blot out the very lights of the heavens.
- ◇ In Joel 2:11, Joel asked a rhetorical question – "Who can endure it?" This suggests that no one can endure this great and dreadful day. This would certainly be true in an eschatological sense.
- ◇

19 **A call to alarm**

- ◇ Joel records the command to blow the trumpet in sound the alarm. Whoever hears Joel's message is responsible for sounding an alarm.
- ◇ In the same way, believers today have the responsibility of telling others how to be saved from the wrath to come. While we do not often like to speak about the wrath of God, that is very much a part of the Gospel message.
 - ◇ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest part of the earth.* (Acts 1:8, LEB)
- ◇

20 **Acts 20:26-27**

- ◇ The apostle Paul understood the responsibility of a watchman.
- ◇ *Therefore I testify to you on this very day that I am guiltless of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the whole purpose of God.* (Acts 20:26–27, LEB)
- ◇

21 **The cause for alarm**

- ◇ In the second half of verse one, Joel describes the day of the Lord as near at hand. The idea is that it was imminent and would come suddenly or at any moment.
- ◇ The day of the Lord is coming and near and should result in the trembling of the lands inhabitants.
- ◇ The coming judgment will remove all vestiges of hope from the faces of those under judgment.
 - ◇ *Like the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains, they leap about; like the sound of a flame of fire devouring stubble; like a strong army arranged in rows for battle. From before them nations writhe, all faces turn pale.* (Joel 2:5–6, LEB)
- ◇

22 **A different kind of enemy**

- ◇ At this time in Israel's history, they primarily had an infantry Army. So being faced with the site of many horses in chariots that suddenly appear would have terrified Israel's army which is on foot.

23 **The coming judgment**

- ◇ *And immediately after the tribulation of those days, 'the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.'* (Matthew 24:29, LEB)
- ◇ It is unlike anything that the world has ever experienced. For this reason, I think this judgment in Joel was eschatological – meaning that it is a coming day that the earth has yet to see.
- ◇ *For you yourselves well know that the day of the Lord is coming in the same way as a thief in the night.* (1 Thessalonians 5:2, LEB)
- ◇ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will disappear with a rushing noise, and the celestial bodies will be destroyed by being burned up, and the earth and the deeds*

done on it will be disclosed. (2 Peter 3:10, LEB)



24 **The nature of the coming Army**

◇ This Army is not composed of God's people, but it is still considered to be directed by God's powerful voice and strengthened to execute His word. God can use any nation to accomplish His will.

◇ The day is great and very terrible (verse 11).

25 **What are we to do?**

◇ As bad as the locust plague of Joel 1 must have been, it was not the worst thing that can happen to a person or nation.

◇ The "day of the Lord" described in Joel 2:1-11 and the other passages we have mentioned present a far more ominous reality.

◇ The only way to prepare for that judgment is to repent and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

◇ Repentance means to be sorry for one's actions and turn in change course. It is an expression of sorrow and grief toward God over one's sins that must be accompanied by change of direction in one's life. True repentance always involves a change in direction.

26 **The only salvation from coming judgment**

◇ *The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the gospel!* (Mark 1:15, LEB)

◇ *For the compensation due sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23, LEB)

◇ *If you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. For the scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who is rich to all who call upon him. For "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Romans 10:9-13, LEB)

