

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE FOR BOOK OF JOEL

TEXT: JOEL 1:1-14

Introduction:

1. The book of Joel is a small book with only three chapters. J. Vernon McGee said, “This little book is like an atom bomb – it is not very big, but it sure is potent and powerful.”
2. We know very little about the prophet Joel. His name means, “Jehovah is God.” Many believe he was the first of the writing prophets.
3. The introduction to the Scofield Study Bible tells us a little bit about Joel’s background.
4. “It is remarkable that Joel, coming at the very beginning of written prophecy (B.C. 836), gives the fullest view of the consummation of all written prophecy” (Scofield Bible, p. 930).
5. The theme of Joel’s prophecy is “the day of the LORD” (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). This is not a 24-hour day.
6. “The day of the LORD” is referred to often by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Zechariah, Zephaniah, and others.
7. It is a technical term referring to judgment and blessing. First comes the judgment (tribulation), and then comes the blessing (millennium). The Jews begin their day at sunset, not sunrise (cf. Genesis 1:5).
8. The prophet Obadiah is the first to introduce the theme of the “Day of the LORD” (Obadiah 15) in 887 BC (according to Scofield), but Joel is the prophet who develops this great theme.
9. The invasion of locusts (1:4) was used by the prophet Joel as an illustration of a future judgment – the Day of the LORD (1:15; 2:25; cf. Scofield note above 1:15 and Introduction).

I. JOEL SPEAKS TO THE OLD MEN (1:1-4).

1. Joel addresses the old men first because of their experience (1:2).
2. In Job 32:6, 7, Elihu said to the older men, “I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”
3. Joel 1:4 does not describe four different insects; rather it is probably a description of the locust in four different stages of growth.
4. The locusts were God’s “army” (2:25). He used them to bring backslidden Israel to repentance (cf. Amos 4:9; Nahum 3:15, 16; Isa. 33:4).
5. John D. Whiting served as American Vice-Consul of Jerusalem from 1908-1910 and from 1915-1917. John Whiting married the daughter of

- Horatio Spafford, the man who wrote the famous hymn, “It is Well With My Soul.”
6. The December 1915 issue of National Geographic published John Whiting’s interesting account of the Palestinian locust plague of 1915.
 7. Regarding Joel’s prophecy, Mr. Whiting wrote, “We marvel how this ancient writer could have given so graphic and true a description of a devastation caused by locusts in so condensed a form.”
 8. Interesting facts about locusts: As an army they march in regular order, camp in the field at night, and in the morning rise with the sun, dry their wings, and fly in the direction of the wind.
 9. Proverbs 30:27 says, “The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.”
 10. God sent locusts as a judgment upon Pharaoh. Exodus 10:15 says, “For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.”
 11. The locusts number in the billions, and have been known to fly 17 hours at a time, covering over 1,500 miles. Their appetite is never satisfied; they devour all vegetation in their path.
 12. They can tear down a tree (1:12), and quickly move through a field, leaving it completely bare (1:6, 7).
 13. In Deuteronomy 28, the LORD warned Israel that if they were to go aside from any of the words which He had command them, they would carry much seed out into the field, but would gather little in, because the locust would consume it (cf. Deut. 28:38, 42).

II. JOEL SPEAKS TO THE DRUNKARDS (1:5-7).

1. The destruction of the vineyards (1:6, 7) meant no more wine for the drunkards. So they would “weep and howl” when their wine “is cut off” (1:5).
2. One of the things that led to Israel’s downfall was the sin of drunkenness (cf. Isa. 5:11, 22; 24:7-9; 28:7, 8; Amos 6:1-7).
3. It will surely lead to America’s downfall as well. Most highway accidents and highway fatalities are caused by drunk drivers.
4. Two hundred and fifty thousand Americans lost their lives in alcohol-related car crashes over the past decade. One American dies every 21 minutes in a car wreck due to drunk driving (over 70 die each day).
5. Up to 64% of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related.

6. There are presently 26,000,000 Americans who are considered to be alcoholics or “problem drinkers.”
7. In America, some \$55 billion is spent annually to purchase alcoholic beverages. Alcohol-related problems cost the American economy at least \$75 billion each year.
8. In America, over 25,000 babies are born every year with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (birth defects, mental retardation, etc.).
9. Alcohol consumption is the leading cause of death for all Americans between the ages of 15 and 24.
10. Eighty three percent of all fire fatalities are alcohol-related.
11. Over 50% of all drownings are alcohol-related.
12. About 80% of all suicides are alcohol-related.
13. An estimated 400,000 Americans die yearly due to the use of alcohol. This includes alcohol-related accidents, homicides, suicides, cirrhosis of the liver, etc.
14. Up to 86% of all murders are alcohol-related, and 65% of child abuse is alcohol-related. Seventy-five percent of all crimes are alcohol-related.
15. According to the Bible, there is a close connection between alcohol and sexual immorality (cf. Gen. 9:20-24; 19:30-38; Proverbs 23:33; Hab. 2:15, 16).
16. “Whereas, the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation, and crime; and believing it our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage” – President Abraham Lincoln, February 22, 1842.

III. JOEL SPEAKS TO THE HUSBANDMEN (1:8-12).

1. The husbandmen (farmers) would suffer great loss as the locusts devoured everything in sight.
2. First they were to lament like a young virgin who had lost her husband (i.e., fiancé) (1:8).
3. The priests would mourn because the offerings were “cut off” (1:9).
4. There were no more grapes, no olive oil, and no grain (1:10). Their three staple crops were destroyed by the locusts.

IV. JOEL SPEAKS TO THE PRIESTS (1:13, 14; cf. 1:9).

1. Nobody could bring the proper sacrifices to the temple because all the crops and all the animals (cf. 1:18) were destroyed.
2. Joel called the priests to lament and howl, and to “call a solemn assembly” (1:14).

3. “Gird yourselves” (1:13) means “put on sackcloth.” They were to humble themselves and seek God’s face (cf. II Chron. 7:14).

CONCLUSION:

1. I would like to conclude with a few words about fasting (1:14; cf. I Samuel 7:5, 6; II Chron. 20:3-13).
2. Fasting must be accompanied by earnest prayer and deep contrition (cf. 2:12-15).
3. Nineveh was a wicked city but they repented in response to Jonah’s preaching. They called a fast and turned to God (cf. Jonah 3:5-10).
4. Unless America repents and turns back to God, it will be all over for America.

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