

# JOEL, JOHN, and the COMING LOCUSTS

## A. LOCUSTS in our Earth and in History

Locusts have a locally prominent place in Scripture. You'll see them at the beginning of the Bible story, a little past the middle, and at the end. When they show up, they take over the text, as in real life they take over their surroundings.

Locusts can be a phase of certain *grasshoppers* at certain times. The word for them is even translated "grasshopper" in the Biblical text, because of the overlap. Fascinatingly, something happens in the brain of this select species of grasshoppers when drought, followed by rapid vegetation growth, occurs. They multiply quickly, come together in huge numbers, and even begin to migrate. Wings are added. They then become agents of destruction, consuming everything green wherever they settle.

The Proverb (30:27) marvels at the fact that although the locusts have no "king", yet they all go out in ranks. Yes, they are united and travel as one huge body when "something" tells them to. The Christian student of the Bible could easily add that that "something" that happens in their brain is orchestrated by the Lord Himself, so that these creatures can be used to do His will when humanity needs a good shaking.

Indeed, this behavior has, at certain points in history, helped cause famines and even human migration.

"The devastations they make in Eastern lands are often very appalling. The invasions of locusts are the heaviest calamities that can befall a country.

"Unable to guide their own flight, though capable of crossing large spaces, they are at the mercy of the wind, which bears them as blind instruments of Providence to the doomed region given over to them for the time. Innumerable as the drops of water or the sands of the seashore, their flight obscures the sun and casts a thick shadow on the earth ([Exodus 10:15](#); [Judges 6:5](#); [7:12](#); [Jeremiah 46:23](#); [Joel 2:10](#)).

"It seems indeed as if a great aerial mountain, many miles in breadth, were advancing with a slow, un-resting progress. Woe to the countries beneath them if the wind falls and lets them alight! They descend unnumbered as flakes of snow and hide the ground. It may be 'like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness. At their approach the people are in anguish; all faces lose their colour' ([Joel 2:6](#)). No walls can stop them; no ditches arrest them; fires kindled in their path are forthwith extinguished by the myriads of their dead,

and the countless armies march on ([Joel 2:8,9](#)). If a door or a window be open, they enter and destroy everything of wood in the house. Every terrace, court, and inner chamber is filled with them in a moment. Such an awful visitation swept over Egypt ([Exodus 10:1-19](#)), consuming before it every green thing, and stripping the trees, till the land was bared of all signs of vegetation. A strong north-west wind from the Mediterranean swept the locusts into the Red Sea.", Geikie's *Hours With the Bible*, ii., 149.

We all know of that famous Bible story in Exodus.

Says Geike, "Their numbers exceed computation: the Hebrews called them 'the countless,' and the Arabs knew them as 'the darkeners of the sun.' "

Other literature documents devastating locust events: Wikipedia relates,

"The [Ancient Egyptians](#) carved locusts on tombs in the period 2470 to 2220 BC, .Plagues of locusts are also mentioned in the [Quran](#). In the ninth century BC, the Chinese authorities appointed anti-locust officers. [Aristotle](#) studied locusts and their breeding habits and [Livy](#) recorded a devastating plague in [Capua](#) in 203 BC. He mentioned human epidemics following locust plagues which he associated with the stench from the putrefying corpses; the linking of human disease outbreaks to locust plagues was widespread. A pestilence in China in 311 AD that killed 98% of the population locally was blamed on locusts, and may have been caused by an increase in numbers of rats (and their fleas) that devoured the locust carcasses."

"A large swarm of locusts can consist of billions of them, spread out over an area of thousands of square kilometers, with a population of up to eighty million individuals per square kilometer (two hundred million per square mile)."

Modern man has learned to control their behavior and growth by insecticides, but the threat is always present. If the climate is right, and men forget to do their part, and especially if men forget to obey God en masse, devastation can be wrought by these curious insects at any time.

173 outbreaks, recorded over a period of nearly 2,000 years, have shown up in China. In America the horrendously destructive Rocky Mountain locust swarm covered nearly 200,000 square miles, weighed 27.5 million tons, and contained perhaps 12.5 trillion locusts! But eventually that family died out, and has not been seen since 1902.

Different continents seem to host different species of grasshopper/locusts. There is one that swarms across Australia. The *desert locust* is the best known because of its huge range, namely northern and western Africa, the Middle East, and India. The *migratory locust* swarms in some of those same areas. Migratory locusts are divided into at least 10 sub-species. One of those groups, a billion strong, in 2013 covered half of the entire country of Madagascar.

Sometimes the tables are turned on locusts, and they become dinner. They are even considered a delicacy in some countries! Kosher per Moses (Leviticus 11:22), John the Baptist seemed to enjoy them (Matthew 3:4). At the least, they are a good source of protein...

## **B. LOCUSTS in the Bible.**

### **1. History. Exodus 10.**

Biblically, we are first introduced to locusts (Hebrew *arbeh*) in the days of Moses, Exodus 10. To indicate the severity of the punishment, locusts are saved until almost last. Only darkness and the killing of the firstborn is considered more horrific than a swarm of locusts. Consider the details, verses 5-6, 14-15:

- The land will be invisible because covered with so many locusts.
- They will eat from every tree and every plant of the field.
- All fruit will likewise be consumed.
- Absolutely nothing green will be left.
- All houses will be filled with these creatures !
- Never before or since have there been so many locusts in Egypt.

The key to this incident, however, is not the power of locusts to destroy. The key is the power of the Lord to direct traffic. First He directs an east wind to bring the creatures to their next meal. After Pharaoh's surface repentance, the same Lord shifts that east wind into a west wind and drives them out, to the last locust.

No accidents here. We can talk about grasshopper's brains, and transitions and unknown and unexpected changes, but the fact is that God is still in charge of His creation, and when the situation calls for it, He can speak to the lowliest creature on earth, a simple grasshopper, and let him know that it's time to change into a scourge of God.

This would not be the last time that the situation would call for it. In fact, Moses lets that same people of Israel know, 40 years later, that locusts can be sent upon them at any time God wills, if their disobedience demands it. (Deuteronomy 28:38) They had enough collective memory of the Egyptian drama to take such a warning seriously.

But memory eventually wears off. They must be reminded again. And so they are, in Solomon's prayer and God's response, in 2 Chronicles 6:28, and 7:13-14. God says that if He should ever have to use locusts again, and the people repent and ask for help, He will indeed hear from Heaven and heal their land. Yes, that famous "heal their land" phrase has to do, in context, with the devastation caused by locusts!

## 2. History *and* Prophecy. The book of Joel

There are two portions of Scripture that I believe need our further scrutiny on the subject of locusts. Actually the *subject* is Bible prophecy, a favorite of mine for sure. The first portion is the prophecy of Joel. I quote here from a former blog of mine, which I entitled “apostolic misinterpretations.”

“I believe the Lord has made it clear to me often that I am never to come against something He may be doing. That's pretty dangerous. So my task today is to work under the umbrella of Ephesus, that church that exposed people who said they were apostles, but were not.

“I tell you the truth, I do not know who is and is not. Not by name. But I do have serious questions about teachings that are floating around in the name of "apostles" and their many followers.

“Take Joel 2, for example. The ‘end time army’ of the Lord, they call it. Their view is more than off base. It's scary. Take a few minutes to read the chapter. Ask for enlightenment from the Spirit. See if you come up with, on your own, the idea that Joel is talking about a bunch of super-believers at the end of history.

“A better exercise is to keep your finger in Joel 2, then flip over to Revelation 9. There to your wondering eyes will appear a near carbon copy of Joel. Not copied, though. Given by the same Spirit to Joel and John, a preview of a horrendous throng of *something* that will one day invade this earth as a part of God's judgment on sin.

“These ‘things’ are associated with the scorching of the earth with fire for miles in every direction. They have wings. They cause incredible pain. The sky is darkened. The closest thing Earth has seen that is like them is the swarming of actual physical locusts in the part of the earth where Joel prophesied. Actually, the swarming had already occurred, and Joel therefore had a context in which to describe the end-time ‘locusts’.”

Let’s do a little more digging in Joel and Revelation... I’ll be asking John MacArthur, via his commentary on the Bible, to come along for some extra guidance. No direct quotes, but an occasional fact from history that John has dug out for us will be mentioned on the way.

The prophet Joel heard from God in the late 800’s B.C. This makes him one of the earlier prophets, and his message was directed to Israel, the northern Kingdom that had early and often fallen into idolatry. Phoenicia to the north and Philistia to the south had been making attacks on Israel, always a part of God’s judgment, namely His lack of protection, when a nation goes afoul of His ways, as Israel certainly had. America could learn from Israel, if she would...

Not only human enemies, but also natural ones, but equally guided by the Spirit of God, had befallen the Israelites. Drought, and locusts. It is this disaster of swarming locusts, which had devoured all the green from the land, that serves as a backdrop to his message. He could tell them what had already happened, literal truth about locust destruction, but could then see into the future, as only God can see, and predict future disasters that looked uncannily similar.

This back and forth from present catastrophe to future catastrophe is what makes the prophecy of Joel very difficult to understand in places. Is he talking about 9<sup>th</sup> century BC Israel, or the coming day of the Lord? Not always clear, and sometimes intertwined, that is the way of the prophet. He speaks what God puts into his ear, and we must have the ear of that same Spirit of God to understand the message.

That being said, there still is no justification for allowing our imaginations to run wild. Prophecy cannot mean just anything we want it to mean. There is a truth to be discovered. A literal actual truth.

Macarthur believes, and I think it a sufficiently valid belief, that chapter one is about Joel's day of the Lord, his present situation. Chapter two begins a transition from that day to the final day, and by the time we get to chapter three, we are in the final day of the Lord exclusively. This then serves as a springboard to the locust prophecy in Revelation, which we will visit later.

Prophecies given more than once need to be heeded. God truly wants His people to know about these locusts. There is a generation that will face them.

Let's go more closely into Joel, then. You will need a Bible from this point on. Open to the prophecy of Joel, and read each verse before you read my commentary.

### **The description: 1: 1-14**

The first 14 verses of Joel's prophecy seem to be a clear description of an awful event that has just occurred. In spite of the figurative language of verse 6, speaking of a "mighty army" with teeth and fangs as lions, the context is no doubt an army of *locusts* that has come, as God said it would come to disobedient Israel, if repentance was not forthcoming.

v. 2. unprecedented.

v. 3-4. a series of different species of locusts come one after the other. This is no accident. This is no freak of nature. This is God speaking as only He knows how. Waiting and waiting for change, and finally, justice must overtake mercy.

v. 5. no wine, because no grapes.

v. 7. no figs because no fig trees. They are stripped of bark and leaves. They are worthless plants.

v. 9. no way to offer the fruit of the earth to the Lord, such as the multitude of grain products: all gone.

v. 10. no olive oil, because no olives.

v. 11. no wheat and barley to eat. Harvest destroyed!

v. 12. gone also the pomegranates, palms, apple trees, all the trees!

v. 14. now it is time for a real fast, for the food is gone! Cry out to God!

### **The transition: 1:15-20**

Here is where some confusion enters. We have been talking about an event of 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Israel. With that as our backdrop we are now talking about something else. Again, herein is the mind of the prophet of the Lord. The prophet of God says and writes what he sees. Joel is telling us of the devastation of Israel but then at the same time, is pointing us to a coming devastation that will far surpass it.

The transition verse is 1:15:

*Alas for the day. For the day of the Lord is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty!*

You can't miss it. We have just come from past and present tenses to a clear view of the future, a theme that will be picked up again in most of chapter 2 and all of chapter 3.

One could easily argue that even the remainder of chapter one is all future tense. Notice that we have come from a stripping of vegetation in the first 14 verses - and yes even through verse 18 -to fire and flame (19-20) and dried up waterbrooks. Was this a companion disaster – drought, with resultant combustibles – to Joel's locusts, or are we in the future judgment by now?

### **The day of the Lord is coming! 2:1-11**

It is impossible to imagine what Joel now sees, but we assume it is awful enough to warrant a severe warning. Though we hear the familiar "it is near" as in the Book of Revelation, we are clued in to the reality that the things Joel is about to describe did not happen in history, ever. Still, what Joel and his people were experiencing could help them believe, as few people today can, that horror is coming to us. Let's listen carefully to his words:

v. 1. tells us of the original location for all of this: Zion! God's "holy mountain." Joel evidently prophesied in Judah, perhaps immediately following the demise of Judah's only female monarch, Athaliah. He has a heart for Jerusalem, capital of the southern Kingdom.

v. 2. Here he first speaks of the threat that is looming: a great and mighty *people*. Not locusts. But numerous as the locusts with which Judah was now familiar. And as destructive. Note also in verse 2 the mention of an event that is unprecedented!

v. 3. Fire. Scorching burning fire that turns "Eden" into "desolate wilderness." Locusts were the precursors of such devastation, but they were not equipped with fire. This is another day.

v.4. With this verse we enter solidly into the Revelation of John, chapter 9, which we will cover later. Whatever these "locust/people" are, they have an appearance and the speed of war horses.

v.5. Their noise is like wheeled vehicles moving at incredible speeds. Viewed at a distance, it is as though these "people" are leaping on the tops of the mountains. Now we are not only beyond locusts, we are beyond anything human, though somehow humans seem to be involved. They are "like" people, says Joel here.

v. 6. Now we see the pain they are causing to normal humans as they are confronted. Anguish. Paleness.

v. 7. These creatures are able to climb a wall like a soldier, run like strong men, and march in a straight line. They are, it can only be from our perspective, mechanical.

v. 8. More here about the orderliness of this army. One thinks immediately of North Korea's goose-stepping soldiers, and its incredibly choreographed demonstrations. And of course swarming locusts and flocking birds. But this end-time army is greater than anything North Korea or the winds of nature have ever imagined.

v. 9. From this verse has come a song that has become popular, yet I have not understood why. Could someone tell me how "spiritual" people have interpreted all that I am sharing with you as some end-time Spirit-filled Christian army establishing God's Kingdom on earth? Where in the world do these fads originate? There is absolutely nothing Christian about the activities of these monstrous beings. A warning is sounded against them, for goodness' sake! They are seen here charging against Jerusalem, climbing into homes through windows, the perfection of terrorism if ever it existed!

v. 10. More stuff of John's apocalypse here: the end-time earthquake! The sun and moon burn out! The stars lessen their light! This is a prophecy of the end of the world as we know it!

v. 11. Here the Lord claims that this army is His! The event acting itself out before a terrified world is His event, brought about by His Word! God has decreed these things from all eternity and they shall happen. Judgment can wait no longer.

There is the Army of angels in the heavenlies, the “Heavenly host.” There is the army of believers, for sure. But God has other armies that can destroy when He allows it. Joel knew of the army of locusts. We shall see the army of diabolical machines, perhaps being prepared in the depths of the earth somewhere as we speak. More on those possibilities later.

### **The Lord offers mercy even now. 2:12-17**

Utterly amazing is the grace and mercy and tenderness of the Lord. “Even now”, He is willing to forgive Judah. Remember He was willing to spare Sodom. And the northern kingdom of Israel. Any nation, including even America, that will repent from the heart will be spared.

v.12. First let Him see something. Fasting, weeping, mourning.

v.13. “Tear your hearts, not – just – your clothing,” has become a classic invitation even to our day. Is it possible that we have waited thus far 2,000 plus years for the return of Jesus because somewhere in the world there has, so far, always been someone tearing their heart before the Lord, truly sorry for sin, truly making the Father smile, and to put off His judgment just a little while longer?

v. 14. “Who knows...” Yet the implication is clear that true repentance will bring God to us. Not a show, an outward manifestation that looks sorry, but isn’t. Rather a true stirring up of the inside of a man until the man dies to his old ways.

v. 15. We return to the beginning of the chapter, with the same theme. A trumpet sounds, this time not for pending judgment, but for pending repentance, the way of escape from that pending judgment.

v. 16. This must be universal. The nation must be on the same page. Old and young. Husbands and wives...

v. 17. ... Priests too, religious leaders. Everyone. The Lord’s ministers, then and now, being called out from their duties to seek God “between the porch and the altar.” Begging God to spare their land. The nation has worn God’s name. Let not that name be brought into reproach, is the thrust of their prayers.

Notice here that they are worried about a “people” who will rule over them, not a swarm of locusts.



Perhaps we need to take a moment to look at that phrase, made popular by preachers like Ravenhill, “between the porch and the altar.” Is there significance, literally or figuratively, in that phrase? Here the priests normally entered to offer their sacrifices. The sacrifice God was looking for now was a broken heart. All the animals in the world would not save Judah, but tears offered in sincerity before the Judge of all the Earth would avail. And still will.

So as we enter our place of sacrifice in our day, where we give our worship, whether it be with music or the uplifted hands or the falling on the face before God, we must let the Spirit of God bring upon us a rending of the heart for lost humanity, a brokenness for the people of God and their idolatrous ways. Hence ministers in our time can be said to be weeping between the porch and the altar. We must enter His presence, but go beyond the ordinary sacrifices, and die to all that is coming between us and revival in our day.

### **The promise of restoration. 2:18-27**

The challenge of interpretation returns in this section. Joel tells the people that even now, if they repent, they will be blessed of God, and things will return to “normal.” But even here it is impossible to fix the words said, to 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Judah. The prophet is again seeing more. His words stretch to the very end of the age, as God fulfills literally His promises to bless a repentant end-time Israel, also.

v. 18. If Judah repents (and did they, fully?) God will have pity on them.

v. 19. Material blessings galore for a broken Israel. But here comes the first problem with the passage: *I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.* No, we must look further than Joel’s day, for sure. Israel must deal with its Savior before its ills can be fully healed. Israel is even now a “reproach” among the nations and has been since its re-creation in 1948. It was even more so in the centuries preceding that day. God cannot lie. He says that when they truly repent they will not be a reproach again. Therefore this passage speaks of the end.

v. 20. The northern army. The same as in chapter one? An end-time army? As in Ezekiel’s talk of such? True, Babylonia could be said to be “north” of Israel, but many see an end-time resurrection of Rosh (Russia) that will swoop down upon unsuspecting Israel, seeking to profit from its riches. This could be repeated once more at the end of the Millennium, also. Ezekiel’s description of Gog and Magog and Rosh and all the rest is an intriguing one, and may indeed be the same thing that Joel sees.

Reference to the stench reminds us of the Scripture that informs God’s people that the army that comes against Israel in the end days will require full time employees to bury its dead soldiers, such will be the slaughter. The supper of the birds of the air comes to mind also. Such

carnage is coming to the planet, and Joel was seeing waves of it intertwined with the pictures he was receiving of the current situation.

v. 21. Fear not. All will end well!

v. 22. After the carnage, restoration. Keep your eyes on what shall finally be, not on what is temporary and meant for the wicked.

v. 23. Nature will return to its normal ways under the blessing of God when His people are in their land, serving Him and ruling all.

v. 24. Prosperity as never before!

v. 25. All the locusts mentioned in chapter one are listed again, and their works countered by the touch of God. Once more Joel brings his present audience into view and sees some immediate responses by God to His people's changed ways. Notice that here Joel calls these locusts "the army" of God.

v. 26. Once more a statement is made that can only be in the far future from Joel: "Then My people will never be put to shame." Never? Never! Hence, it is future. God's people, whether Jew or Gentile, are daily put to shame in this awful generation in which we live.

v. 27. The literal Person of the One True God will exist literally in the midst of His literal people. We must not "spiritualize" passages like these. The tabernacle of God is with men in the end. He will live with them forever, personally, actually. Revelation confirms this concept in its closing chapters. Paradise will be restored!

Note that the promise of "no shame" is repeated here also. It is something He wants us to know.

### **The final days: Spirit and ultimate judgment. 2:28-3:3**

The most famous passage of Joel is this one that is quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. The assumption is that the Holy Spirit gave this passage to Peter, to link what he was experiencing there to the end times that Joel is here prophesying. The link is real, and very instructive, but not what even Peter was thinking in his natural mind. One gets the distinct impression from reading the New Testament that the early church, from messages like this, assumed that Jesus' return was to be very soon. What they and many of us need to comprehend is that the grace and mercy of God has caused Him to place a huge gap of time right in the middle of Joel's prophecy. Let's go verse by verse.

v. 28. Where Joel says "afterwards", Peter, in quoting Joel, tends to interpret him instead by saying "in the last days." Perhaps the Spirit changed Peter's quote in this way to let us know

that Joel was speaking of events that would not come directly after the last things he was talking about (Israel's full restitution in the Millennium). Instead Joel was starting a new paragraph, as it were. As that restitution was to be, in a generic sense, in the future, so is this pouring out of God's Spirit. Verse 28 begins a new topic altogether, the only thing similar to the prior topic being that it will come about later than now.

All mankind is to be affected by this latter day outpouring. We read in Acts only of the beginning of that work, as representatives of all the Gentile nations receive a measure of the Spirit. Supernatural revelations from Heaven are promised not only to leadership, but to sons and daughters, young and old.

v. 29. Even the lowliest of classes are to be touched by this Spirit of God in the last days.

v. 30. But then comes a gap. Suddenly it is not Pentecost. Peter quotes this portion also, to show us something important, but the events of 30-32 have not happened in their fullness yet. Here is pictured the chaotic times also portrayed in the Bible's final prophecies.

v. 31. Matthew 24:29 is in agreement with Joel's statement here about how the sun and moon will not behave as they have for so many millennia. Notice that this entire period is called "the last days". Hence we have been in "the last days" for over 2,000 years. But this verse says that one of these "last days" is the "great and awesome day of the Lord."

v. 32. More "puzzlement" added to the difficulties of this passage. While it is true that whoever calls on Jesus' Name will be delivered from his sins, there is a physical deliverance being mentioned here. When the awfulness of the Tribulation period begins, Revelation tells us that Israel will escape to an appointed place in "the wilderness" outside the reach of antichrist. That is when a horrendous persecution of Christians takes place, But elect Israel escapes, and thus fulfills the words of Joel.

### Chapter 3

v. 1. One often wonders who put chapter divisions in the Bible and why... verses 1-3 are simply a continuation of the previous chapter.

Here again is declared the full restoration of the Kingdom to Jerusalem. People can argue today about what the capital of Israel is. In Scripture there is no argument. For eternity past and present, this city, whether old or new Jerusalem, is God's chosen headquarters. The city of David. The city of Jesus. The shining city on a mountain called Zion. The city with foundations whose builder and maker is God. The city even now being prepared for those who love Him.

v. 2. When God wraps up history He will make public His feelings about Israel by gathering all the nations to a final showdown. This too is spelled out in Revelation. Those who have divided

up Israel improperly (as is true quite dramatically in our day) will have a price to pay. Those who brought such evil pressure on them as to make them leave Israel for places all over the world, these too will pay.

v. 3. Here is described the callous treatment of Jews by Romans, Romanists, and others who despised Israel and Israel's God. They all will be judged on that final day.

### **Judgment of Tyre, Sidon, Philistines, and why. 3:4-8**

Once again there is a change of scenery, and Joel sees things that are right at hand or at least in the near future. In God's eyes, judgment is judgment, and those who need to be judged shall be, regardless of the time involved.

v. 4. The nations are asked, "Are you trying to get even with Me." And then they are reminded that it is God who shall have the final response.

v. 5. We read of Babylon and others, even in the Scriptures, who took away the treasures of the Temple, and used them in their own worship. God does not take any of this lightly, although He did use these pagan nations to punish His people.

v. 6. Atrocities committed against Jews: sold as slaves, even as God had foretold via Moses hundreds of years before. Intricate is the wisdom of the Lord. Here are nations that already are displeasing to God, whose hearts have been hardened against the God of Israel, as Pharaoh's heart. He allows them to go their evil direction even in regards to His people, then catches them in the trap of His judgment later. Who has known the mind of the Lord?

vs. 7-8. Not only will Jewish slaves be freed, but the tables will be turned on those who did the damage. Israel will have been appropriately judged and restored, and now the track record of those who have done the punishing must be addressed.

### **General Judgment again, and the valley of Jehoshaphat. 3:9-17**

Those who have hurt His people are now called out for their sin and told to gather for their ultimate judgment. But here we are catapulted back to a far distant future, beyond even where we are today, when the Judge of all the Earth will bring things to a bloody end. It is Jesus Christ Who has been chosen to do this awful work, and He will do it with precise measure.

v. 9 All nations called to war.

v. 10. Not Isaiah's "swords into plowshares" but the opposite for now.

v. 11. What a spectacle is being announced. Warriors from above, from below, from East and West, gather together. This is the final match between good and evil.

v. 12. The valley of Jehoshaphat is once again named as the location. This is not heavenly warfare. The battle has come to Earth. In time and in a place. You wanted to challenge the God of Heaven? This is your chance to prove what you have.

As to the location of the “valley of Jehoshaphat, I quote from Bible Study Tools, an online help for Bible students, found at the following link:

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/related-topics/valley-of-jehoshaphat.html>

“A key passage associated with the Campaign of Armageddon mentions that God will assemble all nations in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel [Joel 3:2](#), [Joel 3:12](#)). Some hold that the Valley of Jehoshaphat (“Yahweh shall judge”) refers to the valley situated between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives to the east. It was in this valley where king Jehoshaphat is thought to have overthrown the enemies of Israel, the “valley of Beracah” (2Chr. [2Chr. 20:26](#)).

“Its identification with the Kidron Valley, which began in the fourth century, is somewhat uncertain since no actual valley of this name is known to pre-Christian antiquity. Eusebius located the valley of Jehoshaphat in the Valley of Hinnom, possibly because of the judgments that were associated with that place in connection with the idolatrous kings of Judah (cf. Jer. [Jer. 7:31f](#); [Jer. 19:5f](#), where it is called “the valley of Slaughter”). Since the time of the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (A.D. 333), however, the Kidron has become increasingly the site popularly accepted.

“Others suggest the name is descriptive of what God will accomplish (judgment) at the location rather than any association with an event in the life of King Jehoshaphat. Perhaps it is to be associated with the plain of Esdraelon:

“It is clear both from the contexts of Joel [Joel 3:2](#), [Joel 3:12](#) and from the term used twice in Joel [Joel 3:14](#), “the valley of decision” (cf. Zep. [Zep. 3:8](#)), that the name is to be interpreted as the scene of judgment, and not taken from the king of the same name. Eze. [Eze. 39:11](#) and Rev. [Rev. 16:16+](#) seem to locate it in the plain of Esdraelon (Armageddon).”

You may want to dig a little deeper about that valley name, but we must move on...

v. 13. Another clue that we are at the end of time: “the harvest is ripe.” Enough is enough, says God. The period of grace has ended. I did all I could to call men to Myself!

v. 14. Though we know that 2500 years have passed since this announcement, and since God gave the invitation (recorded in Revelation) for beasts of the field to gather for a supper of flesh, yet Joel and John and all keep saying “It is near.” We must hear these words in the light of the One Who speaks them: He is Timeless. A day is as a thousand years. He is merciful. He is ready to judge all today, but He still sees one of His sheep on the hillside, unreached, and His

heart yearns. Signs of pending judgment surround every age, but He waits, He waits. Yet it is near. Sense the tension, and be ready.

v.15. More reminders of heavenly bodies malfunctioning. Yes, this is the very end.

v. 16. Deafening roar of a lion sending fear and trembling to the lost, but His people, still on the planet, are hiding in Him, and are safe, even though they are slaughtered by antichrist during this period. Jews in particular have now found a hiding place on Earth. God shelters His own one way or another.

v. 17. Clear evidence of the timing of this prophecy. Almighty God is now living on the planet! Jerusalem is now truly the Holy City, not because of memories of the One Who walked here, but because He walks here now! This is the beginning of the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ!

### **Israel saved forever. 3:18-21**

No real break here, just one more final glimpse at the way the world will look after God brings justice to Planet Earth.

v. 18. Water, milk, wine cover the earth in its Millennial glory.

v. 19. On the other hand Egypt and Edom are desolate.

v. 20. Judah and Jerusalem survive and prosper, into eternity.

v. 21. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, whether now or later.

So there you have the book of Joel. The message is clear and obvious. Nothing is hidden. Some of the prophecies have been fulfilled, some have not. But all have to do with disobedient Jews and disobedient Gentiles. The Jews will be put to shame via the Gentiles, then the Gentiles will be punished by God Himself. The world shall end, but not end. A glorious future will come upon the people of God, and that future is forever.

The fanciful interpretations of modern-day prophecy “experts” and their wild-eyed followers, amaze and then sadden the one who knows his or her Bible. What I have shared in these pages is indeed what will happen. If you kept your Bible open, you read it for yourself!

One more thing I want to do. I want to go to the Bible’s last mention of locusts (we will kindly pass over the locusts digested by John the Baptist) and see if we can draw any connections to Joel, and any conclusions similar to his.

### 3. Prophecy. Revelation 9.

It is not an easy thing to drop down suddenly into the Book of revelation and start talking about an event John is experiencing, but we must try. So far in the book, Jesus has revealed His person to John, and His warnings to seven churches that existed in the province called "Asia", first century.

From there John is taken personally into Heaven to be shown what shall come upon the Earth during (in my opinion) the last years of Earth's history. A book is slowly unsealed. At the sixth seal, we come to the final climax of that history. But then there is a lull in the action, and it looks like we are backing up a little in time. We see Jews being marked out for preservation during the Tribulation, then we see Christians being slaughtered during that same time period and showing up in Heaven.

Then, when we thought all was over, the story continues by the breaking of a seventh seal, and inside that seven seal are revealed seven angels blowing seven trumpets, one at a time. We know that it is at the "last trumpet" that the end comes, so we assume that we have put the camera in reverse mode, and are taking close-ups of what we have already seen.

Each one of these final trumpets sounds the destruction of huge portions of real estate, and the deaths of untold numbers of people. Nature is out of control. Chaos reigns. And then three last trumpets, trumpets of woe they are called, begin to sound.

It is the first of these last three that will be the focus of our thinking. Hopefully, having just come from the book of Joel, discerning hearts will see how the same Spirit spoke to Joel and John so that together God's end-time people will know what is coming.

Let's do a verse-by-verse on Revelation 9:1-12, keeping the book of Joel opened to the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, verses 1-11. Get those Bibles out. (You might even want to use two Bibles this time, as I did...)

Revelation 9:

v. 1. The fifth of the seven angels, or the first of the three final "woe" angels, now sounds his trumpet. The sound points to another angel (star) falling from heaven to earth, receiving the key to the "bottomless" pit. This pit seems to be the final destination of the enemies of Christ. Now they will endure untold suffering and punishment inside the earth. One day, I speculate, the Earth itself will be hurled into the darkness of space, all creatures inside still being tormented. Day and night. Forever and ever.

An angel guards this pit. Into it go the damned. Out of it come those whom God sees fit to carry out His will, especially in the end-time series of judgments. One that He sees fit to release is

antichrist Himself, Revelation 17. Another story for another day. It is this restraining angel that I believe is being referred to in II Thessalonians, not the Holy Spirit. The angel is restraining antichrist from coming until the Lord gives the nod.

v. 2. For now, there are other residents of the pit that must be released. If this pit is an antechamber of Hell, it could well be that there are people on earth working toward the stocking of this pit with the creatures that shall come out of it. Machines, perhaps. Or, what we shall behold is a purely supernaturally created and collected group of latter day monstrous terrorists.

Smoke is released first. *The sun and the atmosphere are all darkened.* One is reminded of the smog over various cities, caused by emissions of fuel. Thousands of motors being started at the same time? Or bombs.

But we must hurry to Joel for a moment: 2:1-2: “...The day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand. *A day of darkness and gloominess. A day of clouds and thick darkness,* like the morning clouds spread over the mountains...”

Fits perfectly so far, don't you think?

v. 3. From the smoke, or when the smoke clears, behold, “locusts!” And the locusts are given power. Power like a scorpion has power. Painful. Dangerous. Can hurt. Can kill. And so many!

Here, Joel (2:2) talks of a great “people”, though many Bible versions use the term “army”. It is a gathering of individuals that are called locusts in Revelation and that act like locusts in Joel. But the inference is that in neither place are they little grasshoppers that suddenly went off for a trip through some fields. Remember that the locusts of Joel, the real ones, are only a backdrop, an illustration of what this end-time army will be. John calls them “locusts.” Let's see...

Notice that they are “great and strong, the like of whom has never been” in Joel, and “power was given to them” seems to be the parallel of John.

v. 4. If I have correctly identified John's locust army with Joel's, verse 4 seems in contradiction to Joel's account at this place. Joel says that a fire comes before the locusts, and a flame burns after the locusts... and nothing shall escape them. But John sees that the “locusts” are told *not* to hurt any green thing, and rather to focus on hurting unregenerate men.

I will offer an explanation, but do not wish to bind anyone to it. If I have called it wrong, at least I have been able to show you a close similarity in these two judgments, and hopefully inspire you to dig a little deeper.



My explanation is this. There are seven trumpets. If, as is very possible, they happen in rapid succession or nearly simultaneously, Joel's passage and John's could be fulfilled by looking at the trumpets immediately before and immediately after the fifth sounding:

Immediately before seem to be all four of the first trumpets. Notice the fraction 1/3 linking these four events. All at once, a huge portion of the waters, the land, the atmosphere, are destroyed, and part of this destruction is the burning of the earth. That is, "*a fire devours before the locusts.*" (Joel 2:3)

And then look at the trumpet right after this one. A second army comes on the scene, from the East, immediately following the first, riding on horses out of which come fire and brimstone... in other words, *behind the locusts a fire burns!* (Joel 2:3)

Preceded and followed by fire, the locusts themselves do not have to do that sort of damage. Their job is to bring pain to *people*. It looks as though they are preparing the way for the army following, by paralyzing millions of men who would normally be men of war.

In Joel's vision he may indeed have seen fire before and fire after, and assumed it was locusts causing it, but the text of Joel cannot be forced to say that. "Nothing shall escape them" because they will paralyze men so adequately that they will be destroyed by the onslaught from the East. (Again, a topic we cannot cover here.)

v. 5-6. As we have seen, they will not even be killing people, but rather, slowing them down, so that they are powerless to respond to what is coming. The "sting" in their "tails" will incapacitate their victims for 5 months. I see men writhing with sweat in their beds, raging fevers, poisoned by the locust-creatures. Like when a man is stung by a scorpion. They will want to die, it will be so awful. But they will not die. Not from the sting. They will just be set aside...

*Emedicine health*, online, relates that "a person experiencing a serious reaction [as is true in only a few of the worst of scorpion bites] may develop severe symptoms throughout the body. Severe symptoms include widespread numbness, [difficulty swallowing](#), a thick tongue, blurred vision, roving eye movements, [seizures](#), salivation, and difficulty breathing. These symptoms constitute a medical emergency. Death may occur..."

And that is just an ordinary Earth creature. These creatures from the pit, we can only imagine.

Joel (v. 6) also sees people writhing in pain, faces drained of color.

v. 7 (Revelation) matches so well with Joel 2:4, that I want to try to hold on to the connection between these two passages. Both passages state that the appearance of these "locusts" is really more like *horses*. Horses prepared for battle, says John. War horses, says Joel. A striking similarity indeed.

Joel goes on to tell in more detail what an army of war horses sounds like. Like chariots. Cars. Vehicles. They are literally leaping over the mountains, he says. John joins with him in Revelation 9:9, where the sound of their “wings” was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

Let’s stop. We are not talking about real locusts. We are not talking about real horses. We are not talking about people. All the comparisons are there to help us make a discerning deduction about what is coming. Awful, awful assembly of creatures, released from Hell, tormenting men, able to climb and jump around mountains, as loud as our loudest airplanes and helicopters. Are they indeed able to fly also, since they are called locusts? One would think so.

Joel mentions here another noise they resemble: a flaming fire. Once again see that these locusts are not said to be producing fire, only sounding like fire. And they sound like a human army too. Ghastly sight. Ghastly sounds.

Now a look at the heads of these “locusts.” It says they *appeared* to be crowns like gold. Many have speculated about this entire description that what we are looking at is nothing more than a helicopter. I have bought into this possibility myself, and will buy out of it in a few paragraphs, but it is indeed inviting to see this crown of gold as nothing more than the shimmering of helicopter blades in full motion. I do not rule out that something akin to helicopter technology is meant here. You will soon see that a modern helicopter doesn’t paint the whole picture.

v. 7-8. Faces like men. Hair like women. Well, the broad windshield of a helicopter gives one a full view of the person operating the machine. It is not difficult these days to imagine that a woman or two could well be doing the navigating here.

Teeth like lions is where things begin to slow down in the imagery. We are, after all, talking about a destructive creature or device. Locusts must always be our point of reference. And even more to the point, Joel brings out that their damage, like locusts also, is done on the ground, not in the air. Let’s go back to Joel.

These creatures run. They climb like men. They march in formation, perfectly, without so much as touching one another, ever. They are very agile, moving here and there but never hit by enemy fire( Joel 2:7-8).

Back to Revelation. Teeth like lions, we still haven’t interpreted. Whatever it is, it is the mechanism whereby these “things” can rip away anything that blocks them from entrance to wherever they want to go. They are unstoppable. As locusts.

v. 9. Breastplates like iron. Takes us back to the helicopter/machine description. A steel – plated vehicle impenetrable by normal weapons. Have we not seen all this on the movies of horror?

No not really, but we get a little inkling from them. Martians. Machines. War of the Worlds. It's coming. Really coming here.

v. 10. The scorpion-like "tails" of these monsters are undoubtedly weapons like we have seen jutting out from helicopters, planes, tanks. Guns, loaded with perhaps biological weapons, that spread a virus from one community to another, sickening but not yet killing, all in their pathway.

They operate, not only in the air and in the typical battlefield, but in the city, running across city walls. They even climb into people's houses through the windows. Horror!

I get the helicopter thing. But these are land creatures too. We've seen vehicles that can operate equally well on land and in water. Now we shall see an air/land hybrid.

Perhaps a drone?\* No human contact, totally controlled remotely? War games in the most literal of senses? Are there thousands upon thousands of these being manufactured secretly and stored underground in a common location, to be released when God says release?

In Joel again:

Joel's verse 10 is helpful for those who still may be hung up about the fact that it is not the locusts who bring the fire before and after their own destruction (2:3). Here in 2:10 we suddenly see an earthquake, and signs in the heavens. These things too are not caused by the locusts, but happen at a very close time to them.

We have only now to see who (Who) is in charge of all this.

Verse 11 in both chapters gives an answer.

Joel: This is the Lord's army! This is the Lord executing His Word, fulfilling His promises, judging evil that righteousness will prevail! "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible..."

John – or his accompanying angel - prefers to tell us the name of the "angel of the abyss", the one who was called down from the heavenlies to open the bottomless pit. He is their head, their king, we are told. This leads us to believe that when 9:1 speaks of an angel "falling" to the earth, we are to take literally that fall, as in Satan's fall from his glory.

Nevertheless, I do not believe this angel, this king of the monsters, is Satan himself, who is occupied on the earth filling up the man "antichrist". Satan is not omnipresent. Rather, one who has been appointed by Satan to destroy is before us. He is given a name here. It is not Satan, or the serpent, or the devil, or Lucifer, names we would readily have identified with our mortal enemy. No, his name is *Abaddon* (Hebrew "destruction") or *Apollyon* (Greek,

“destroyer”). As head of an army of locusts that destroy people’s health, their homes, and who knows what else, it is an apt title.

## **Conclusion**

I am about finished. A bit exhausted, in fact, in seeing these horrible things up close. Imagine Joel or John having received even more first-hand the information I have presented to you. Joel lived through the destruction of grasshopper-locusts, and saw their evolution into a creature of end-time horror. John was escorted by an angel practically into their faces. His description is terrifying, but builds on the original given to the prophet of Judah.

There can be no mistake. I cannot find other words to describe how calamitous the final years of this planet before Christ’s coming will be. One third of civilization wiped out. Charred woodlands. Burnt fields. Men and women and children crying out for help from a disease that will paralyze them for half a year. Military might showing its muscle and gut to the point of, well, no return except His return.

And thank God for His return. Revelation 9 is not the end of the Book. But it’s in there. Locusts that look like horses that look like people that run and climb and fly and march and terrorize. The locusts are coming.

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\*As in these articles, found online...Drones: Locust and cicada warfare...

**“Drones will hunt in packs, as US Navy unveils LOCUST prototype launcher.”**

**<http://www.rt.com/usa/250233-us-drones-navy-locust/>**

Drone technology is getting ever more deadly. The US Navy has released a video detailing LOCUST – the new tool allowing multiple drones to coordinate and swarm the enemy autonomously. It’s designed to protect large US vessels nearby.

The concept was detailed by the Navy last year, which only this month allowed the Office of Naval Research (ONR) to demonstrate what LOCUST – or the Low-Cost Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Swarming Technology program – can do. They’re touting the tool as a new era in autonomous warfare.

LOCUST is essentially a system that can launch swarming UAVs to overwhelm the enemy and provide the marines and sailors operating them with a massive tactical advantage, ONR explains in the press release.

*“The recent demonstrations are an important step on the way to the 2016 ship-based demonstration of 30 rapidly launched autonomous, swarming UAVs,”* program manager Lee Mastroianni says.

*“This level of autonomous swarming flight has never been done before... UAVs that are expendable and reconfigurable will free manned aircraft and traditional weapon systems to do more, and essentially multiply combat power at decreased risk to the warfighter,”* he adds.

The program acts in several stages: first, a tube-based launcher will fire a swarm of UAVs from a ship, aircraft, or any surface, for that matter – owing to the device’s small footprint. Once airborne, the drones share information and coordinate an offense or a defense, each drone playing its allotted part.

ONR says the technology is revolutionary in its heavy advantage over remote-controlled UAVs. But safeguards are always needed, so human personnel will be standing by to take over if necessary.

The added benefit of the new drone program, and drones in general, is their ability to save greatly on costs for the US military. The emphasis on autonomy on the battlefield will become even greater over the next 10-15 years, according to the Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert’s outline of the strategy.

The ONR is not the first to research the field of multiple UAVs linking up to perform joint tasks. The famous Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency or DARPA has been pursuing its Collaborative Operations in Denied Environment (CODE) program, which aims to allow a single pilot to operate multiple drones at once, as well as his own aircraft.

## **Cicadas, locusts, and the new innovation of military infestations**

Here is the “CICADA” warfare possibility. I offer these not as the definite fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but as a suggestion that the technology being suggested here is available now. Revelation 9 can come to pass most any day now...

Link to article:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/05/20/cicadas-locusts-and-the-new-innovation-of-military-infestations/>

One of the highlights of [the Pentagon’s first-ever Department of Defense Lab Day in Washington, D.C.](#) on May 14 was the demonstration of [new micro aerial vehicles known as CICADAs](#). These micro-drones, which can be deployed from military aircraft at altitudes close to

50,000 feet and still fit in the palm of your hand, could represent the next big thing in the way wars are waged. Think military infestations rather than military invasions.

The [CICADA](#) (which stands for Close-In Covert Autonomous Disposable Aircraft) is relatively cheap, easy to make and totally disposable. Best of all, they're as hard to destroy as the cicadas in your backyard during summer – in one test scenario in Arizona, the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory released these micro-drones 57,600 feet in the air, let them free fall 11 miles in the sky, and then watched as they glided to within 15 feet of their target destination.

“They've flown through trees. They've hit asphalt runways. They have tumbled in gravel. They've had sand in them. The only thing that we found that killed them was desert shrubbery,” Daniel Edwards, an aerospace engineer at the Naval Research Laboratory, [said at the DoD Lab Day event](#).

For the foreseeable future, most of the work of these CICADAs will be related to surveillance and intelligence-gathering, just as [the Black Hornet mini helicopter drones](#) were used by the British Army in Afghanistan to detect Taliban fighting units. Some of the scenarios outlined by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory include dropping CICADA drones tens of thousands of feet above enemy lines, where they can be used to eavesdrop on troop movements once they are equipped with microphones. At the very least, they might provide a clue about traffic or activity at checkpoints on roads leading into and out of difficult terrain. If you add magnetic sensors, they might even be able to pick up the movement of submarines below the water's surface.

But here's another thing – the official description of these CICADAs is [“an unmanned glider, nearly undetectable, that delivers payloads to precise waypoints.”](#) The word that should have sparked your attention, of course, is “payloads.” Yes, imagine dropping these CICADAs out over enemy territory, each of them armed with a small micro-payload of death. Enemy radars won't be able to pick them up, and even if you look up into the sky, you'll just see what appears to be a small bird or insect flying.

The fascinating part of the CICADA program is how these micro drones could eventually be used as part of a “robotic swarm” to overwhelm an adversary. An enemy may be able to defend against several of these drones, but just try to defend against a giant swarm of them launched out of the back of a plane. A separate but related U.S. Navy experiment carried out as part of the SWARM program at the Office of Naval Research (ONR) showcased the potential effectiveness of the new [LOCUST \(Low-Cost UAV Swarming Technology\) program](#). Imagine 30 micro aerial vehicles launched all at once to carry out strikes on enemy territory.

And, in fact, there's a growing literature about so-called “robotic swarms” — which are essentially drones or bots that can be programmed to behave intelligently during combat. And best of all, these bots and drones can form “swarms” without the need for humans to control

them. In another related experiment, [the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory showed how a group of 13 “swarm boats”](#) — all of them without requiring a human drone operator — could be used to protect a high-value naval vessel.

And it doesn't stop there. Imagine giant [“aircraft carriers in the sky,”](#) capable of launching whole fleets of mini-drones at one time. Or, better yet, how about underwater aircraft carriers? As Peter W. Singer, an expert on drones and warfare, [pointed out about recent DARPA initiatives](#), “If you are looking at other places where you might see aircraft carriers, don't look up in the air, look under the water.”

Yes, that's right — underwater aircraft carriers for drones. In yet another experiment, the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory [showed that it was possible to release a drone from a submerged submarine](#) with the robotic drone shot out of a Tomahawk missile tube. As the drone emerges from the tube, its wings unfold before it speeds off to its destination.

Mind blown.

What makes micro aerial vehicles such as the CICADA so attractive, of course, is that they're cheap to make and simple to operate. By the estimates of the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, a single prototype for a CICADA can be produced for less than \$1,000. And as more uses are found for these micro-drones, it's easy to see the price falling further. One scenario being bandied about is using these CICADAS to monitor extreme weather situations, such as tornadoes. Within a few years, as more applications are discovered, that price might drop to as low as \$250.

In terms of simplicity, they're basically a [“piece of cardboard with a circuit board.”](#) They're not sophisticated drones that you have to learn how to pilot. You just load them up in a plane, fly really high, and drop them out the back end of a plane. That's huge, if you take into account the latest report from the GAO, which suggests that [there just aren't enough drone pilots out there to keep up with the military's use of drones](#).

Cheap, simple, disposable and without the need for a human operator — it's no wonder, then, that the military is so interested in the potential applications of these micro CICADA drones.

Remember when the future of warfare was bigger — bigger missile payloads, bigger tanks and bigger warplanes? In an era of asymmetric warfare, tiny innovations such as the CICADA are what might be needed to take the fight to the enemy in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Imagine if the U.S. military had been able to drop off hundreds of these CICADAs over mountainous areas of Afghanistan or Pakistan in the search for Osama bin Laden. Forget “boots on the ground,” “insect wings in the sky” might be a better metaphor. If giant swarms of insect-like drones can save the lives of U.S. soldiers abroad, then let the CICADA infestation begin.