



# Joel



**THRU**the**BIBLE**

NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

*J. Vernon McGee*

MINOR PROPHETS



# Joel

**WRITER:** Joel. Nothing is known of this prophet except what is given in the opening verse. His name means *Jehovah is God*.

**TIME:** Considered by many to be the earliest of the writing prophets, he was a prophet to Judah probably about the time of the reign of Joash, king of Judah. He probably knew Elijah and Elisha. The critical school, adopting their usual custom, have placed this book at the other extreme, even after the captivity.

**THEME:** “The day of the LORD”  
(Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2, 10, 11, 30, 31; 3:14-16)

## FEATURES:

- 1 “The day of the LORD” or “the day of Jehovah” is an expression introduced by Joel (if he is the first of the writing prophets—there are about 50 prophets in all). From the mountaintop of the beginning of written prophecy, he saw the farthest into the future. “The day of the LORD” is an expression that is fraught with meaning. It seems to include not only the coming Millennial Kingdom, but also to include all the judgments which precede the setting up of the Kingdom and the return of Christ.

- 2** His description of a literal plague of locusts and its comparison with future judgments is a dramatic and literary gem.
- 3** He is the prophet who mentioned the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which was referred to by Peter on the Day of Pentecost.

## **OUTLINE:**

- I. Literal and local plague of locusts, Chapter 1:1-14**
- II. Looking to the day of the LORD (prelude), Chapters 1:15–2:3**
- III. Looking at the day of the LORD (postlude), Chapter 3**
  - A. The Great Tribulation, vv. 1-15
  - B. The Millennial Kingdom, vv. 16-21

## COMMENT:

### I. Literal and local plague of locusts, Chapter 1:1-14

W. 1, 2—There is nothing like this locust plague in the memory of man.

V. 3—There is nothing like the locust plague in the future. It is unprecedented and will be remembered as something that cannot be compared to any other similar experience in the history of the nation. The Great Tribulation is just such an experience according to the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 24:21).

V. 4

“Palmer worm” (*gazam*) means to gnaw off

“Locust” (*arbeh*) means to be many; migratory

“Cankerworm” (*yeleq*) means to lick off

“Caterpillar” (*chasil*) means to devour; consume

Some expositors interpret these words as describing four stages of the development of the caterpillar, while others consider them to be four different kinds of insects. On many occasions, locusts devastated large portions of the earth. The island of Cyprus was stripped by locusts for 250 years. The Israelite was permitted to eat locusts (Leviticus 11:22). Locusts were sent as a judgment from God (see Deuteronomy 28:38-42; 1 Kings 8:37). In Revelation 9:1-12 is the final fulfillment of locusts.

V. 5—“Drunkards”—drunkenness is the national sin that prophets condemn (especially Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos). The drunkards are addressed because the locusts had destroyed the vine that produces the grapes from which the wine is made.

W. 6, 7—Locusts are compared to an invading army—indeed they were just as destructive.

V. 8—The drunkard is to mourn like a young bride for a departed husband. This is the first group called to mourn.

V. 9—The priests are to mourn because no longer will there be meal and wine for the offerings.

Evidently Joel is a prophet to Judah, as he makes several references to the house of the Lord (see also vv. 13, 14).

V. 10—This total devastation of the land is the result of the plague of locusts. The nation has become a disaster area. The Lord calls ten times upon different segments of the population to mourn and repent (vv. 8, 11, 13, 14) by doing ten things.

V. 11, 12

Second group called to mourn—the farmers.

Third group called to mourn—the fruitgrowers.

V. 13

Fourth group called to mourn—the priests.

Fifth group called to mourn—ministers of the altar (to lie all night in sackcloth).

Sixth group called to mourn—ministers of God (to lie all night in sackcloth).

V. 14

Seventh group—sanctify a fast.

Eighth group—call a solemn assembly.

Ninth group—gather elders together in the Lord's house.

Tenth group—elders and inhabitants to cry aloud to God.

## II. Looking to the day of the LORD (prelude), Chapters 1:15–2:3

### CHAPTER 1

V. 15—"The day of the LORD" is first mentioned. (This is not the Lord's day. There is a vast difference of meaning, and they are no more alike than a chestnut horse and a horse chestnut.) Simply stated, the day of the LORD is in contrast to man's day or Satan's day. The day of the LORD begins with the Great Tribulation and extends through the Millennial Kingdom (see FEATURES in introduction). The plague of locusts was in a real sense a miniature day of the LORD. The plague was an adumbration of the Great Tribulation.

V. 16-20—These are the results of the locust plague.

### CHAPTER 2

V. 1—See Numbers 10:9 for the sounding of an alarm with the trumpet.

The prophet now looks to the Great Tribulation Period. The coming invasion of the Assyrian army is a foretaste of it.

V. 2–The Hebrew day begins with sundown—the evening and morning are the day. The day of the LORD opens with the Great Tribulation, not with the coming of Christ to set up the Kingdom (see Amos 5:18).

W. 2-10—This is a description of the Great Tribulation.

V. 11—This is the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom.

W. 12-17—His last call to repent reveals the Lord’s graciousness even in judgment. A remnant will repent and return to God (see Ezekiel 20:37, 38).

W. 18, 19—“Then” is a great prophetic word (see Matthew 24:9, 16, 21, 23, 30). Up to this point there is judgment, disaster, and tragedy. From this point through chapter 2 there are blessings and benefits. These prophecies have not been fulfilled.

V. 20—The northern army of Assyria will be driven back, but there is coming another great army from the north (see Ezekiel 38, 39).

V. 23—Literal rain is referred to here. The “former rain” came in October, the “latter rain” in April. See other references to literal rain (Leviticus 26:3, 4; Deuteronomy 11:14-17; 1 Kings 8:35, 36; Jeremiah 3:3; Hosea 6:3). These references make it clear that this passage cannot be spiritualized, but refers to literal rain.

V. 25—This could have been a beautiful application to men today, but it also is literal—a literal reference to the restoration of the land to plenty and blessing.

W. 26, 27—These verses continue to make clear the literal interpretation of this entire section which has not yet been fulfilled.

W. 28-32—Peter quoted this on the Day of Pentecost as an explanation for the conduct of the believers. They were filled with the Spirit, not filled with wine. Peter did not say that the experience was a fulfillment of Joel. He did not say, “*That it might be fulfilled* which was spoken through the prophet Joel,” but rather, “*This is that* which was spoken through the prophet, Joel.” (See Acts 2:15-21 and author’s notes on Acts.) Joel’s prophecy was not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit filled only the believers, not “all flesh” (v. 28) as Joel predicts. The “wonders” (v. 30) that Joel said would appear in the heavens were not in evidence on the Day of Pentecost. The prophecy of Joel awaits “the great and the terrible day of the LORD” (v. 31) which is yet future (see Joel 3:2 and Zechariah 2:10, 11).

### **III. Looking at the day of the LORD (postlude), Chapter 3**

#### **A. The Great Tribulation, vv. 1-15**

V. 1–The regathering of Israel in the land will probably take place in the first part of the Great Tribulation Period (the first three and a half years). See Ezekiel 37:12-18 and Acts 15:15-18.

V. 2–Gentile nations will come against the little nation of Israel (Daniel 11:40-45). This is the campaign of Armageddon, which ends with the coming of Christ to deliver His people and establish His Kingdom.

W. 3-8–The nations will be judged because of their unjust treatment of Israel in the past.

W. 9-15–This is a picture of the Great Tribulation Period. Joel, the first of the writing prophets, projects himself into the future and looks back upon the Great Tribulation Period, “the day of the LORD.”

#### **B. The Millennial Kingdom, vv. 16-21**

Neither today nor during the Great Tribulation is the time to beat swords into ploughshares; rather the opposite is true (v. 10).

W. 16-21–The coming of Christ ends the Great Tribulation Period and brings in the Kingdom.

V. 17–The Lord Jesus Christ shall reign in person.

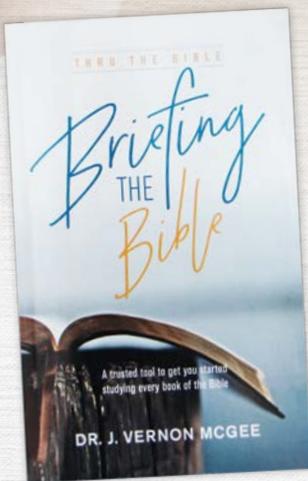
V. 18–The land will become the land of milk and honey.

V. 19–Judgment of the lands of Egypt and Assyria continues into the Kingdom Age (see Isaiah 19:22-25).

V. 20–Note the permanency of the land of Israel.

V. 21–See Zechariah 12:10; 13:1.

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