

# Joel

# INTRODUCTION

Joel proclaims the coming of the day of the Lord. This is the climax of Joel's vision.

(a) It is to be preceded by preternatural signs. "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Joel 2:31).

(b) It is to be ushered in by war and tumult. "Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors!" (3:9). "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears" (3:10). "Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side" (3:12).

(c) It is to be accompanied by the angels of heaven. "Bring down your warriors, O LORD!" (3:11). These are the mighty angels who are to accompany the final appearing of Jesus Christ.

(d) It is to end in the overthrow and destruction of the ungodly nations.

Swing the sickle,  
for the harvest is ripe.  
Come, trample the grapes,  
for the winepress is full  
and the vats overflow—  
so great is their wickedness!

Multitudes, multitudes  
in the valley of decision! (Joel 3:13-14)

This is the same figure that John uses in the book of Revelation, where the "winepress of God's wrath" (14:19) is used to describe God's final judgment upon the wicked nations.

(e) It is to be also accompanied by the revelation of God in His glory. "The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble" (Joel 3:16).

(f) It is to be a day of salvation for His own people. The Lord "will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel" (3:16). Literally, this means the "harbor" or place of refuge on that awful day.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

## Joel 1:1-20

**The Desolation of the Land, 1-7.** The locusts point to something more terrible and form a prophetic picture of a greater disaster. They prefigure an invading army, 6-7 (cf. 2:25) and its desolation of the land. Both the vine (Ps. 80:8, 14; Hos. 10:1; Isa. 5:1-7) and the fig tree symbolize Israel in her spiritual privilege and national election (Hos. 9:10; Mt. 24:32-33; Lk. 13:6-7; Rom. 11:17-24).

**Appeal to Lament the Plague, 8-13.** All people, 8-10, especially the farmer and vinedresser, 11-12, the priests and spiritual leaders of the nation, 13, are called to mourn.

**Call to Self-Humiliation and Repentance, 14.** Fasting and prayer must give evidence of genuine repentance.

**The Plague a Prophetic Symbol of the Day of the Lord, 15-20.** Just as the Spirit of prophecy frequently uses some local circumstance as the occasion of a far-reaching prophecy (cf. Isa 7:1-14 in the case of the virgin-birth prediction), so the locust plague is made a symbol of the yet future day of the Lord (Isa. 2:12-22; 4:1-6; Ez. 30:3; Rev. 19:11-21). In this apocalyptic period (Rev 6-19), the Lord will manifest His power in putting down His enemies actively and publicly in order to set up His mediatorial kingdom over Israel. It is the period described graphically in Psalms 2.

(Unger's Bible Handbook, Merrill F. Unger)

### **When does this locust plague occur and whom does it affect?**

#### **Elaborate more on what the "Day of the Lord" is and brings.**

Isa. 2:12   Isa. 13:6, 9   Jer. 46:10   Ezek. 30:1-3   Ezek. 32:6-8   Joel 2:10   Joel 3:15   Amos 5:18   Obad. 15  
Zeph. 1:14   Peter 3:7-14

## Joel 2:1-11

Out of *the well of the Bottomless Pit* issued a smoke, so great that the sun and the air were darkened (Rev. 9:2), and out of the smoke came "locusts upon the earth". We regard these "locusts" as identical with the creatures referred to in the prophecy of Joel (2:1-11). By noticing what is said of them in Joel 2 and Rev. 9 it is at once apparent that they are no ordinary locusts. Joel says of them, "A great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it" (2:2). It is said, "When they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded" (2:8). The fact that they issue from the Pit also denotes that they are supernatural beings. In the description furnished in Rev. 9 they seem to be a kind of *infernal cherubim*, for "the horse" (v. 7), the "man" (v. 7), the "lion" (v. 8), and "the scorpion" (v. 19) are combined in them. Their number is given as two hundred thousand thousand. Who, then, are these infernal beings? No commentator that we are acquainted with has attempted an answer. It is therefore with diffidence that we suggest, without being dogmatic, that they are, most likely, *fallen angels* now imprisoned in Tartarus. We give three reasons which, in our judgment, point to this conclusion.

First, we know from 2 Pet. 2:4 that the angels which sinned were "cast down to Tartarus", and in Rev. 9:2, 3 we are told there "arose a smoke out of the Pit . . . and there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth". Now, as pointed out, these infernal "locusts" issue from "*the well of the Pit*", an expression occurring nowhere else in Scripture, and only the "locusts" are said to come from *there*. So also the term "Tartarus" is found nowhere but in 2 Pet. 2:4. It seems likely, then, that "*the well of the Pit*" may be only another name for "Tartarus" (with which *only* fallen angels are connected), just as "the Lake of Fire" is only another name for "Gehenna". Who else could these locusts be *but* the fallen angels? To say we do not know may savor of humility, but shall the writer be deemed presumptuous because he has sought to furnish an answer by comparing scripture with scripture?

In the second place, it is surely significant that the "king" of these "locusts" is termed in Rev. 9:11 "the *angel* of the Bottomless Pit"! A title which is nowhere else given to him. Just as Christ, the "Angel of the Covenant" (Mal. 3:1—cf Isa. 63:9, etc.) is, again and again, termed an "angel" in the Apocalypse (see 8:3, 10:1, 20:1, etc.), so the Antichrist is here denominated "the Angel of the Bottomless Pit". And just as we learn from Matt. 25:31 that "the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and *all the holy angels* with Him" (cf Matt. 24:31), so when the Son of Perdition is manifested, *all* the unholy angels will be *with him!*

In the third place, let the language of 2 Pet. 2:4 be carefully examined: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment". It is to the last clause we wish to direct attention. Let it be compared with the 9th verse of the same chapter—"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment *to be punished*". Wicked human beings are said to be reserved "unto *the Day of Judgment to be punished*". But this is not what is said of the angels that sinned, though, of course, eternal punishment awaits them as we learn from Matt. 25:41. 2 Pet. 2:4 simply says they are "reserved unto judgment", and we believe this means that God is holding them in Tartarus until His time comes for Him to use them as one of His instruments of *judgment* upon an ungodly world. The *time* when God will thus use them is stated in Jude 6—it will be in "the judgment of the great day" (compare Rev. 6:17 for "the great day"). Confirmatory of this, observe that in Joel 2:11 the Lord calls the supernatural locusts "*His army*", then employed to inflict

sore punishments on apostate Israel (Ps. 78:49 speaks of God using "evil angels" (those mentioned in Rev. 12:7) in His judgments on Egypt.). If our interpretation of 2 Pet. 2:4 be correct, namely, that it makes no reference to the future punishment of the fallen angels, this explains why the Lord in Matt. 25:41 when referring to future punishment was careful to mention *them* specifically.

Returning now to Rev. 9:11 the Antichrist is here termed the "King over" the locusts. Let the reader pay careful attention to what is predicated of these infernal beings in Joel 2 and here in Rev. 9, and let him remember they number no less than two hundred millions, and then see if it does not throw new light on Rev. 13:4, where concerning the Antichrist the question is asked, "Who is able to make war with *him*?!!" How utterly futile to engage in conflict one who commands an "army" of two hundred millions, none of whom are subject to death! In the second place, he is here termed "the Angel of the Bottomless Pit", a title peculiarly appropriate as the leader of the fallen angels; and, as well, a title which denotes the superhuman nature of the Son of Perdition. In the third place, we are here told that his name "in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon". This title serves to establish beyond a shadow of doubt the identity of this "King" of the infernal "locusts", this "Angel of the Bottomless Pit". The Hebrew and the Greek names signify the same thing in English—the Destroyer. It is "the Destroyer of the Gentiles" of Jer. 4:7, translated "Spoiler" in Isa. 16:4 and Jer. 6:24. Suitable name is this for the one who is the great opponent of the *Savior*. "Destroyer" is close akin to "Death" in Rev. 6:8. The reason why his name is given here in both Hebrew and Greek is because he will be connected with and be the destroyer of *both* Jews and Gentiles! But why give the Hebrew name first? Because the order in judgment, as in grace, is "the Jew first"—see Rom. 2:9 and 1:16 for each, respectively.

"And when they shall have finished their testimony (the two witnesses in Rev. 11:3-6), the Beast that ascendeth out of the Bottomless Pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" (Rev. 11:7). This is the first time in the Revelation that the Antichrist is seen in his character of "the Beast". The last scripture which we have examined serves at once to identify him. He is termed "the Angel of the Bottomless Pit", because in a peculiar sense the Abyss is his home. There he has been during all the centuries of this Christian era. In Acts 1:23 the Pit is called "his *own* place". Here the Beast is shown ascending out of the Bottomless Pit. What, then, is the Abyss? It appears to be the special abode of infernal creatures. As we have seen, out of its "well" issue the fallen angels. From it comes the Beast. And in it Satan himself is incarcerated for the thousand years (Rev. 20:3). The "Abyss" is quite distinct from "Hades" in which the souls of lost *human* beings are now being tormented; as it must also be distinguished from "Gehenna" or "the Lake of Fire" in which *all* the lost shall suffer forever and ever.

(The Antichrist, A. W. Pink)

**Show that the symbolic locust described in Joel are probably the same described in Revelation 9. If this is so, elaborate on the "king over them the angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:11)?**

2 Thess. 2

The Lord's Army appearing involves the second advent of Christ and is a phase of the titanic struggle at Armageddon (Joel 3:9-13; Rev 16:14). The saints and angels will constitute the Lord's "camp." (Merrill F. Unger) **Compare the expression "utter his voice," in Joel 2:11 with the words of Rev 19:15.**

### Joel 2:12-27

The Lord calls upon the remnant in the land genuinely to repent, Joel 2:12-13, and to receive the Lord's blessing, Joel 2:14. All classes, Joel 2:15-17, are included. None is excused, not even the newly wed bridegroom (cf. Deut 24:5).

In Joel 2:18-27 we see the Lord's Response to the Repentant Jews in the Land. Instead of His fiery wrath burning against them, the Lord's fiery jealousy will flame for them and His mercy go out toward them, Joel 2:18. He promises temporal prosperity, Joel 2:19; military deliverance, Joel 2:20 joy and gladness, Joel 2:21-23; restored rainfall and abundant harvests, Joel 2:24-26; restored fellowship, Joel 2:27.

(Unger's Bible Handbook, Merrill F. Unger)

"Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God," (Joel 2:13) explains the oriental custom of rending robes. People were ready enough to use the outward signs of mourning, as in the present. (Charles H. Spurgeon) **What is God looking for the people to do during this time? How do these natural calamities, wars, etc. bring about God's purpose?**

Joel 1:1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 19 Joel 2:12-13

**Has God shown to be "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness;" (Joel 2:13)?**

### Joel 2:28-32

In Joel 2:28-32 is the Promise of the Outpoured Spirit. Keil takes the outpouring of the Spirit as a second and later result of the gift of "the teacher of righteousness" (cf. Joel 2:23). The "afterward" and "in the last days," Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:16), refer to the days of Israel's exaltation and blessing in the opening era of the kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-7). The term "pour out" signifies communication in rich abundance (cf. Isa 32:15; Ezk 39:29). Peter's use of this prophecy at Pentecost (Acts 2:15-21) was illustrative of what the Spirit of God can do. Its fulfillment awaits the introduction of the Kingdom Age. The reason Peter quoted Joel was to show that the evidences of the outpoured Spirit at Pentecost were just a sample of what the Jew could expect when the O. T. promised kingdom is introduced. The kingdom outpouring is to be universal, 28-29, and is to be connected with the climactic phase of "the day of the Lord," 30-31, with preceding signs announcing the dispossession of wicked men at the setting up of Christ's kingdom on the earth, 32.

(Unger's Bible Handbook, Merrill F. Unger)

**Could the "former rain" (Joel 2:23, 28) be described as the first advent of Christ "in due measure" and the "latter rain" (Joel 2:23) the full outpouring of the Spirit upon Israel first, and then the world "in the last days"?**

Isa. 2:2      Isa. 66:8-13

### **Joel 3:1-21**

"In those days and in that time" (Joel 3:1) denote that phase of "the day of the Lord" which will witness Israel's restoration (Isa. 11:10-12; Jer. 23:5-8; Ezek. 37:21-28; Acts 15:15-17). This passage is introductory to the primary theme of the judgment of the nations, Joel 3:2-8, inasmuch as that event is a necessary prerequisite to Israel's reinstatement. The nations that have persecuted Israel must be judged before Israel can be brought into safety and blessing (cf. Mt. 25:31-46; Rom. 11:25-27; Zech. 6:1-8; Rev. 16:14).

The Lord Himself is the speaker, Joel 3:2-8. He announces what He will do to Israel's enemies when He restores His people (note "My people," Joel 3:3). The place of the judgment is said to be "the valley of Jehosaphat," Joel 3:2, 12. This is usually taken as a symbolical rather than a geographical name, as inferred from the etymology, "*Yahweh* shall judge" and from Joel 3:14, where the same valley is called the "valley of decision," in the sense of a judicial sentence or verdict (rendered against the wicked nations judged there). However, both Joel and Zechariah (cf. Zech. 14:4) evidently regarded this theater of judgment as the Kidron Valley and the widening mountain basin to the south of the city beyond Hinnom. Kidron is now also known as the valley of Jehoshaphat, called so as early as Eusebius, but evidently on the basis of the Joel and Zechariah passages.

The basis of the judgment will be "on account of *my* people . . . my heritage Israel," Joel 3:2. The sin of the nations has been their mistreatment of the Jew (cf. Ps. 79:1-13; 83:1-18; Isa. 29:1-8; 34:1-3; Jer. 25:13-17; Zech. 1:14-15; 12:2-3; Mt. 25:31-46). Joel 3:2-3 indicates the crime of the nations, with special condemnation resting upon the Phoenicians and Philistines, Joel 3:4-8. The Sabaeans, 8, were traders of southwest Arabia. The judgment of the nations connects with Armageddon, Joel 3:9-14 (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:11-21), and Joel 3:15-16 parallels Joel 2:30-32. Joel 3:9-16 summarize Joel 2:9-32.

At last unbelieving Israel receives the Messiah, the true basis of their holiness, Joel 3:17 (cf. Zech. 14:20-21), "My holy mountain" is Moriah, the temple hill (cf. Ps. 2:6; Dan. 11:45; Ob. 16; Zech. 8:3). The kingdom prosperity of Palestine, Joel 3:18, is a common prophetic theme toward which all the prophets gravitate (cf. Isa. 35:1-3). The related themes of the destruction of Israel's enemies, Egypt and Edom, Joel 3:19 (cf. Zech. 14:18-19), and the restoration of Judah, Joel 3:20-21, are also prominent.

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Before the second advent of Messiah there shall be one last desperate effort made by Satan, Antichrist, and their dupes, against the Lord and His people. The powers of the world shall be arrayed against their Maker and Divine King in open hostility. It shall be the closing scene of man's apostasy. As Baal's worshippers were gathered by Jehu, without one being wanting, for the glorification of Baal, as they thought, but really for their own destruction, so "all the heathen" (Joel 3:11), that is, all who belong not really to Christ, shall assemble themselves, "the mighty men" and the "weak" alike (Joel 3:9) for the destruction of God's people and the glorification of Antichrist, as they shall think, but really for their own destruction. (A. R. Fausset) **At this point who does the Antichrist pretend to be?**

2 Thess. 2:4

**What will be the outcome in the "Valley of Decision" (Joel 3:14) for: Egyptians, Edom and Israel?**

Joel 3:14-21    Acts 2:28-29    Rev. 16:14-16    Rev. 20:7-10    Rev. 22:1-2