

# Introduction to Joel

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## Book Title

Joel

## Author

Joel, son of Pethuel. *Joel* means “Jehovah is God.”

## Date of Authorship

The dating of Joel’s prophecy is not extremely easy. Due to the fact that the message of Amos seems to be dependent on that of Joel, it is surmised that the latter was written during the reign of Joash king of Judah, around 830 BC. (Benware, Paul. *Survey of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody, 1988, p. 180ff.)

## Historical Background

A plague of insects had ravaged the land of Judah (and perhaps all of Palestine), destroying all kinds of crops. This plague was so devastating that it is characterized by the metaphor of an army (1.6-7; 2.25). The plague of insects was accompanied by drought (1.12, 19-20). These calamities were a divine judgment on the nation’s spiritual laxity. Temple sacrifice had apparently ceased (1.9, 13; 2.14), and the joy of the people was as dry as the land (1.12, 16). The nation had grown loose in its commitment to serve Jehovah, for which He sought earnestly to bring them back to Himself.

## Message

Joel is a call to spiritual renewal. It is full of imperatives: “Hear” (1.2) , “Tell” (1.3) , “Awake” (1.5) , “Weep” (1.5), “Howl” (1.5, 11), “Lament” (1.8, 13), “Be ye ashamed” (1.11), “Gird yourselves” (1.13), “Lie all night in sackcloth” (1.13), etc. Specific instructions are given by God concerning restoration to fellowship with Him (1.13-14; 2.15-17). The path to restoration is one of repentance (2.13), and it must begin with the spiritual leadership segment of the population (1.9, 13-14; 2.17).

## Doctrinal Emphasis

Joel has a wonderful portrait of God’s grace. Judah had strayed from the will of God to the point that the Temple sacrifice had ceased. In other words, Judah was no longer concerned with sin. In response to Judah’s apathy, God sent His insect army to draw the nation’s attention to Him. And yet, for all His judgment, the LORD presents Himself as a gracious and merciful God. This is

nowhere expressed more succinctly than in 2.12-13. Joel also prophesies of the coming (outpouring) of the Holy Spirit in the future. Peter attested to the fulfillment of this prophecy at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2.16-21). Note that the Spirit was promised without any regard for sex, age, or social status (2.28-29; Comp. 1 Cor 12.13; Gal 3.28).

### **Prophetic Emphasis**

There can be no question about it: Joel is foretelling an event/period which he terms “the Day of the LORD” (1.15; 2.1, 11, 31; 3.14). Repeatedly he speaks of this divine intervention in history, underlining its proximity (1.15; 2.1; 3.14), destructiveness and violence (1.15; 2.11), darkness (2.1), greatness and terribleness (2.11, 31), and unparalleled nature (2.1). Joel’s discussion of the Day of the LORD seems to be intertwined with his prophecies of restoration from plague and drought. It is very difficult to draw objective lines between the two. It is clear that the Day of the LORD will be a time of gloominess (2.2ff); that it will have definite spiritual correlations (2.28ff); and that God will defend His people Israel in a battle against the nations (3.1-2, 12-14, 16). The book concludes with a series of promises which best fit into the prophetic scheme as part of the Kingdom.