

# Joel Introduction

1. Book involves a plague of locust or a locust invasion in Judah
  - a. interpretation of this is a challenge
  - b. does it represent a human military invasion or is it an actual locust invasion
  - c. does it have an eschatological reference in any way
2. One of the overarching themes of the book of Joel is the "Day of the Lord"
3. Joel
  - a. "the word of the Lord" came to Joel
  - b. Joel father's name is mentioned – Pethuel
4. Date of writing
  - a. the date of writing is also debated
  - b. some claim it was written before Hosea around 800 BC, a more modern opinion is that it was written after the return from Babylon
  - c. Jewish tradition supports an early date
  - d. Joel is arranged early in the order of the Minor Prophets coming between Hosea (760-710 BC) and Amos (760-754 BC). But, Obadiah (clearly 586 BC) follows Amos and is before Jonah (759 BC)
  - e. Joel is not mentioned with any kings or historical reference may be because he was known by those who assembled the Jewish canon of Scripture (Old Testament)

## **Proofs to consider for a late, postexile writing:**

- A. Often kings are mentioned in the opening when the name and family of the prophet is identified. Here there are no kings used to identify the time of Joel's words from the Lord.
- B. The authority in the city of Jerusalem in Joel's day is not a king, but elders and the priests. This would seem to refer to a time after the kings and thus postexile.
- C. The Northern kingdom of Israel is not mentioned as being in existence or as a historical memory/example, and the focus is on Jerusalem. This would seem to indicate Joel was ministering in a time well after Northern Israel's fall in 722 BC. Words common among the prophets such as "Ephraim" and "Samaria" are missing. Also, Joel uses "Israel" to refer NOT to northern Israel (contrasting with Judah in the south), but to the whole united nation of that time not known as a group of 10 tribes in the north and 2 tribes in the south.
- D. Walls of the city of Jerusalem are mentioned in Joel 2:7-9 -  
"Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall...They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief."  
Jerusalem's walls were tore and not rebuilt between the years 586-445 BC, so Joel was written before 586 BC (for example between 760-586 BC) or after 445 BC (for example 445-345 BC)
- E. Temple was built and in operation. Temple was destroyed in 586 BC but rebuilt by 516 BC.

F. Israelites are referred to as captives and exiles in Joel 3:1-2:

“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land...”

G. The whole nation could be called upon to assemble in Jerusalem in Joel 1:14. This would seem like a small, local population that existed after the return from Babylon and not to the larger population during the times of the kings.

“Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.”

H. Joel quotes other prophets so either Joel is using the former prophets for reference, terminology and a source, or the prophets that follow Joel are quoting him.

- **Obadiah 17** is quoted and introduced with “as the Lord has said” which may indicate Joel knew he was quoting Obadiah’s words “But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance” when Joel writes,

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

-Which came first:

- **Isaiah 2:4** – “He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

- **Micah 4:3** – “He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

- Joel 3:10 – “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am a warrior.”

-Other quotes from the prophets:

-**Isaiah 13:6** (Joel 1:15) – “Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.”

-**Ezekiel 30:2-3** (Joel 1:15) – ““Wail and say, “Alas for that day!” For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

-**Zephaniah 1:14-15** (Joel 2:1-2) – “The great day of the Lord is near—near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry. That day will be a day of wrath—a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness...”

-**Malachi 3:2** (Joel 2:11) – “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.

-**Malachi 4:5** (Joel 2:31) – ““See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.”

I. Jews were sold as slaves to Greeks in Joel 3:6:

“You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them...”

The Greeks were a rising power around 356 BC with King Philip of Macedonia (father of Alexander). Yet the Greeks were a people of the sea throughout the ancient world. Even the Philistines were Greeks.

J. Angels coming with the Lord in judgment occurs in Joel 3:11:

“Bring down your warriors, O Lord.”

Thinking and teaching on angels developed after the book of Daniel and Ezekiel while the Jews were in Babylon and are often mentioned in the later prophets. But, throughout the Old Testament YHWH is known as “the Lord of hosts” or the ruler over the angelic armies.

K. The original language includes words and phrases from Aramaic, which was the language of the people returning from Babylon.

L. There is no mention of the Empire enemies: Assyria, Babylon, Persia. They are past or passing. But, there is mention of local enemies.

M. Sidon of the Phoenicians was crushed by Artaxerxes III in 345 BC and Tyre destroyed by Alexander in 332 BC, but Sidon and Tyre are mentioned in Joel 3:4 which would indicate Joel was written before 345 BC:

“What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples.”