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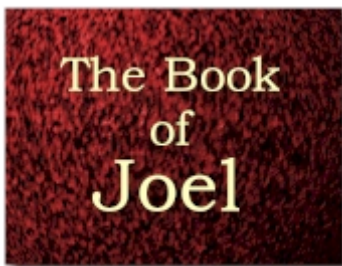
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The Book of Joel

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., December 1996
 Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, January 2013

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for January 2013](#)



In the first Christian sermon preached by the apostle Peter, he centered on one prophecy out of all those found in the Old Testament. In his mind, this one prophecy was one of the most important to show the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah of Israel. What prophecy was Peter teaching? The apostle Peter concentrated on the main prophecy of Joel, when he spoke on Pentecost Day in 30 AD, some 50 days after the crucifixion of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. The reason Peter pinpointed Joel is clear when you understand the societal and religious environment in which Peter lived at that time amongst the Jews.¹

The apostle Paul also mentioned that the Jews had a certain priority of interest at the time, and their interest was most important. It had to do with prophecy. It had to do with signs. They wanted miracles; they wanted to see wonders. They wanted to witness things they could identify as coming from God in heaven. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:22, **“For the Jews require a sign ...”** In fact, it is plural in the Greek — he actually said “signs,” more than one. They did not want just one sign, they wanted many signs.

Paul continued, **“... and the Greeks [the Gentiles generally] they sought after wisdom.”** They wanted philosophical teachings. They wanted to understand how the universe came into existence, and how God acts today.

We all want those things, and the Jews do, too. But the concentration amongst the Jews was primarily on signs, wonders, and miracles. This is exactly what Christ Jesus gave them when He taught in Galilee, Perea (east of the Jordan River), Judea, and in Jerusalem. The Jews expected the Messiah to come, accompanied by many signs and many wonders. In John 4:48 Jesus said to the Jews in Galilee, **“you see signs and wonders.”** Even then, He says, you do not believe, and they did not.

Peter's Sermon

Because they wanted to see those things, and they wanted evidence from Jesus who He truly was, the

¹ Read all three chapters (73 verses) of the Book of Joel before you go any further in this article. Read it in the King James Version if you wish, but also try to read it in a more modern translation. DWS

apostle Peter began the very first Christian sermon by selecting a very important prophecy from the Old Testament, which the Jews were well acquainted with. Peter focused on the theme that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, the Christ, the One sent to redeem mankind to the God the Father and bring the Jews themselves to redemption and atonement with God. The fact that Peter chose this particular prophecy shows the religious, prophetic, or social environment, in which the Jews found themselves at the time. Signs and wonders were what they wanted (and what they will seek at the end time). Peter appropriated the prophecy of Joel to his time as a type.

A Sign Is Given

In the period just in advance of us, the Jews look for signs and wonders, and miracles, to identify who the Messiah really is, or was. They will find He was none other than Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth. It is prophesied that they will make that discovery. We find this directly shown several places in Scripture.

Joel is part of this process. This is why Peter selected Joel as the central prophecy to introduce their “Messiah” to the Jews — if they would listen and accept Jesus of Nazareth as the One who fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding Messiah, all of which are in God’s hands.

In Acts chapter 2 his sermon starts in verse 1 by telling us it was the day of Pentecost, some 50 days after the resurrection of the dead, of Jesus Christ. The people were all assembled near the Temple.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them [the apostles, and the others who were around]. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

• **Acts 2:2–4**

This was a miracle in itself. It goes on to show that these people were Jews and proselytes. Later we find they were inside the Temple courts. To be inside those Temple courts meant you had to be Jewish. You had to be circumcised, and be a full-fledged Israelite, spiritually and physically. It says in verse 5, **“There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven”** (Acts 2:5).

The Jews had been scattered in the diaspora. They were not only in Palestine, but also in many other regions around the Middle East. This great multitude of people gathered together on Pentecost day was confounded by what the apostles were saying because every man, it seemed, heard them speak in his own language. These were all Jews or proselytes, but at the same time they had lived in these foreign areas so long that they forgot the Hebrew tongue.

Here was the apostle Peter speaking, either in Hebrew or Aramaic, and each of them heard the words in his own language. This was a miracle; this was a sign, and the Jews were quite aware of the fact. So here we have something which the Jews would have been interested in, according to the temperament of the time (1 Corinthians 1:22). Continuing on in Acts:

“And they were all amazed, and marveled saying one to another, ‘Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?’”

• **Acts 2:7**

They not only dressed like Galileans, they had the Galilean accent, which was very distinct, just like we today can usually tell if a person comes from southern Georgia, or upper New England. It was easy to tell that Peter was a Galilean. And so they said:

“... are not all these which speak Galileans? [But we] we hear every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”

• **Acts 2:7–8**

This is referring to a variety of tongues. There was one language going forth, but the interpretation, the

hearing, miraculously came across in each listener's own language. Luke even specified some of the nations, the areas, where these Jews and proselytes were born:

- Parthians (from north of Mesopotamia),
- Medes (north of Parthia),
- Elamites (farther to the east),
- dwellers in Mesopotamia,
- in "Judea,"²
- Cappadocia (in Asia Minor),
- Pontus and Asia (the area of Ephesus),
- Phrygia and Pamphylia (in Egypt),
- Libya (north Africa),
- Cyrene (also north in Africa),
- strangers of Rome (from the city of Rome in Italy),
- Cretans (from the island of Crete), and also
- Arabians (from the Arabian regions).

They were congregating in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. All were Jews in the Temple, and they were hearing the apostle Peter, and others, beginning to speak in their own languages. The central sermon had not been given yet; it was to be given by the apostle Peter in just a moment. They were all speaking about Jesus of Nazareth, who He was, and things like that. Suddenly, they began to calm down, and wondered if some great miracle must be taking place here. Indeed there was.

Some said "why this jibber jabber, what is going on." Those people could not understand in some cases because their ears were not open to what was happening. They noticed (verse 13) and said, "**All these men are just full of new wine.**" That was all.

Peter Speaks

Peter perceived what was happening and gives the time of day when all of this was going on. It was very early in the morning.

"Peter, standing up with the eleven ... [all of the apostles together] 'You men of Judea, and you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these [Peter's companions] are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.'"

• **Acts 2:14**

They counted hours from sunrise. The third hour of the day was about nine o'clock in the morning, our time. Peter said, "... **But this** [this miracle evident to all the people] **is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel**" (Acts 2:16).

This was the introductory phrase to this sermon, this lecture, which Peter was going to give. This is the top apostle synthesizing the teachings of the other apostles by coming up, standing in their midst, and calming the crowd. He focuses on a prime prophecy of Joel, because the apostle Peter thought at that time the prophecy of Joel was to be fulfilled in his generation.

Peter was mistaken. The Bible is clear that the apostles, at first, were not given the clear indications of chronology. Christ referred to this, the apostle Paul referred to it, even Peter himself later on, in 2 Peter 3:8

² There was a place in Mesopotamia at the time so filled with Jews that they even called it after the name of Judea. It does not mean Judea in Palestine. *ELM*

when he wrote, **“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.”** God does not count the way we do, as some people would say, “He should have come by now.”

Peter first thought this was the case, and Paul later thought the same. All Christians, at first, thought that within their generation, within 40 years after the death and resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of God would appear on Earth and Israel would be exalted amongst the nations. The Temple would be destroyed, but a new Temple would be built and a wonderful period known as the Kingdom of God would emerge on Earth, about which the prophets spoke.

All the apostles believed those events would occur in their generation, so it is no wonder the apostle Peter would pick this prophecy here, which speaks about the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord introduces a time of special prophecies for the Kingdom of God to be fulfilled on Earth.

There are prophecies of destruction, but also prophecies of restoration mentioned in the Old Testament, and we find them also repeated in the New Testament when the Book of Revelation was written. The apostle Peter picked a central prophecy to show the Jews at the time that he thought they were participating in the very prophecies of Joel to introduce **“the Day of the Lord.”** Peter says, **“but this is ...”** and he means this represents what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

Occurrences in the Last Days

I will go to Joel soon to give this prophecy from the context of Peter in the Book of Acts. It is better if we approach the Book of Joel in this manner because it gives the Christian interpretation, based upon Peter’s understanding at that time. Here is what he says:

“... ‘it shall come to pass in the last days,’ says God, ‘I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.’”

• **Acts 2:17**

This does not mean it will happen on a wide scale all the time. There is a particular time when this will take place, and that is what the apostle Peter was talking about.³ There will come a time in the future when this prophecy of Joel will be in evidence. The apostle Peter expected it at that time. It will happen just prior to the advent of the Day of the Lord on Earth, yet future to us.

The apostle Peter gives this prophecy, saying there will be a rejuvenation of prophetic teachings by men, by women, by old people, and by young people. The prophetic spirit and the visionary aspect of understanding prophecy will be given,

“... on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show ...”

• **Acts 2:18–19**

Accompanying this miraculous intervention, by giving knowledge and understanding of a spiritual nature to man, will be given signs and wonders. This is what the Jews were expecting, and this is why the

³ It said sons **and** daughters. Women were not allowed to speak in the *ekklesia* in an official capacity. That did not mean that they do not have the power of prophesying as well as men. You find in Acts 21:9 that Philip’s daughters were able to prophesy. Other women have prophesied in the past, and will do so in the future. But there is no dominant role that they have as far as Christian ecclesiastical services are concerned, in which they participate as heads of the congregations. But they are capable of prophesying and understanding spiritual matters from God. God will, from time to time, not only select men, but He will select women and give them visions.

We should be careful of visions and dreams however. Remember that in the 4th Century, Constantine and his mother, through visions, dreams, and supernatural signs, selected the wrong place for the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ in the western part of Jerusalem. They did so even though the Bible and history make it clear that it was in the eastern section, on the Mount of Olives. We are told to be very careful about false prophets that go into the world, but there are also the real prophecies to be received. *ELM*

apostle Peter picked this prophecy of signs and wonders, to teach them, quoting from Joel:

“[And] I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; [which will be] blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, BEFORE the great and notable day of YHWH come.”

• Acts 2:19–20

We have not seen verse 20 come to pass — yet — from the prophecies of Joel. We will soon. At the same time, there will be visions by men and women. So let us put the two together, and not get them mixed.

This will occur — the sun turning into darkness, and the moon into blood — before the **“notable Day of the Lord [YHWH in Hebrew].”** If you look carefully, the sun being blackened, or darkened, can only occur for less than one day in the prophecies. Remember Joshua’s long day (Joshua 10:12–14)? There was no day like it, nor will there be another since, because the sun is a covenant sign to ancient Israel that God’s marriage covenant between Israel and Himself would continue to last as long as the sun shines in its daily affairs, and the moon comes up in its daily motions.

It means these signs seen here can only occur within a less than 24-hour period, believe it or not. You and I have not witnessed these things yet. They are still future to us. It says in the next verse of Acts:

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever [at this time] shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

• Acts 2:21

That was the prophecy Peter uttered. Then he began his teaching, his commentary⁴ based upon the central prophecy of Joel dealing with signs and wonders. This is what the Jews anticipated; this is what they wanted, and Peter gave them precisely what he thought was necessary. He starts out by saying:

“You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know.”

• Acts 2:22

They were quite aware of the fact. We find in the 21st chapter of Acts that so many Jews at the time were convinced Jesus, Yeshua, was the Messiah that well over half of the Jewish people of Palestine believed it. Tens of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem believed,⁵ and Acts was written within a contemporary historical context. Many Jews living at the time were very taken by these signs and wonders, not only these signs taking place at Pentecost, but the signs Jesus Himself had done earlier, and the other signs the apostles would do later. Quite a number of miraculous things occurred then over a long period of time, but no one has seen anything like it since.

The Jews back at that time were not in doubt. They had a great understanding and knowledge that something from God was occurring. Events such as this will be repeated in the next few years in advance of us. The people of Israel will witness major restorations of these visions, and signs, and miracles. They will be accompanied by the sun itself, and the moon, and the heavens, being affected.

Joel’s Prophecy

I wanted to give to you this background about the prophecy of Joel, because it is a very short prophecy in the Old Testament. It is the second prophecy of the 12 Minor Prophets, as they are called.⁶ Joel wrote

⁴ Peter was giving what the Jews call *midrash* or commentary on the text of Joel. DWS

⁵ The Greek translates to **“many myriads.”** A myriad is 10,000 in number, so **“many myriads”** would mean “tens of thousands,” likely more than three myriads or 30,000 or more. This could easily be more than half the usual population of Jerusalem, outside of the festival seasons when the population expanded greatly. DWS

⁶ See Dr. Martin’s presentation [“The Minor Prophets for Today”](#) for an excellent introduction and basic explanation to these twelve important prophetic books. DWS

these prophecies in the 9th century before the birth of Jesus about the future **“Day of the Lord”** on earth and about the astronomical signs associated with such an event.

There is one thing Peter did not mention. Again, it was something that never happened in the time of the apostles, or earlier. We find in Joel chapters 1 and 2 a major prophetic event of destruction prophesied by Joel which precedes the events discussed by Peter. Before this major prophecy of destruction happens, there will come a time of refreshment according to Peter (and this is in Acts 3), a time of restoration of the knowledge of the truth. You and I are living in that very period at this moment.⁷

Before the Destruction

We need to get back to the pure teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments. A time of great refreshment and restoration is under way, of which you are a part. Once this restoration and refreshment becomes full (and it is not very far away) then we will find the main prophecies of Joel happening.

The prophecy section which Peter picked was Joel 2:28–32. I read a portion of the chapter from Acts, chapter 2 as Peter quoted it. The Jews at the time were very familiar with the prophecy. No prophecy in the Old Testament spoke of more miracles and signs to occur than this one in Joel.

Joel speaks in verse 2:31 of the sun being turned into darkness. Only God could do such a thing. The moon will be turned into blood, and other wonders in the heavens, the earth, blood, fire, pillars of smoke, and things of that nature will occur. All of this will happen before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. The prophecy that Peter selected is in the middle of the Book of Joel.

Yet something else occurs in Joel’s prophecy which Peter did not mention. He did not mention it because the things shown in the prophecy never happened in the time of Peter or in the generations before Peter. As far as we know, these events never happened in history, but they will happen in the future to us today. The prophecies of Joel, and all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, will find their fulfillment.

Joel says, **“And it shall come to pass afterward”** (Joel 2:28). **“Afterward”**? After what? After the things told of in the preceding section of Joel. The word **“afterward”** is stated differently in Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:17. Peter was admitting that certain events were to take place, things which will introduce this period of time when:

Joel 2:28, 31 KJV	Acts 2:17, 20 KJV
<p>“And it shall come to pass <u>AFTERWARD</u>, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ...</p> <p>The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, <u>before</u> the great and the terrible day of YHWH come.”</p>	<p>“And it shall come to pass <u>IN THE LAST DAYS</u>, ... I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ...</p> <p>The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, <u>before</u> that great and notable day of the Lord come.”</p>

There will be a time in the future when God shall show wonders in the heavens, and the earth, blood, fire, pillars of smoke. Yet all these things occur after something else. After what? This is when you must turn back to Joel, and you will be surprised at what you find.

⁷ What is happening in the world is the restoration of the gospel as you and I have never seen it before. We are going away from the Hellenistic teachings of the gospel that we thought were Christian teachings. In fact, these teachings are not from Judaic sources at all. They come from sources that absorbed our parents, yours and mine. They meant well, but on the other hand, we absorbed all types of teachings that have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ. *ELM*

The Focus of the Book of Joel

Joel was written in the last part of the 9th century or the beginning of the 8th century BC. We find the word of Yahweh coming to Joel and its main emphasis is almost exclusively to the country of Judah and not to the northern tribes of Israel, or Galilee. Moreover, within Judah it focuses primarily to the area central around Jerusalem. A number of verses refer to this area, and to the Holy Temple, which will exist at Jerusalem. The prophecies of Joel, all of its 3 chapters, anticipate that there will be a Temple at Jerusalem.⁸

This first chapter and part of the second chapter are a prophecy of destruction upon Judah, particularly Jerusalem. Interestingly, according to Joel it will not be a destruction coming from the hand of man. In other words, it will not be the Assyrians, or the Babylonians, or Persians, or the Greeks, or even the Romans who will do it. The Romans were in charge when the apostle Peter quoted this prophecy. The Romans have come and gone, and the Roman Empire is no longer with us. Today we have around Jerusalem today several kingdoms, and political powers.

We have in Europe some very powerful countries. The United States, at the present time (December 1996), is reckoned to be the most powerful, political, and military force on Earth today. We have powerful nations around Israel, there is no question. However, this first prophecy, a unique prophecy, does not even involve humans at all? And yet, it will take place.

This destruction will come *after* a restitution of all things. This is important to note. This prophecy of destruction upon the nation of Israel will take about one year to experience, and it is an utter destruction. Immediately on the heels of this destruction, conditions will begin to be restored. The destruction will not be engendered by mankind, but when it happens the people of Israel will know God is in charge, because He says what this destruction will be like. The land will be like the Garden of Eden beforehand, and it will be utterly destroyed afterward, once this northern power comes through the land and does as prophesied.

“Hear this, you old men, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land [the land of Judah, not the world]. Has this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell you your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.”

• **Joel 1:2**

It will happen just one time, and it has never happened before. When it happens, afterward it will be told down through the ages. Here is the prophecy of what will occur:

“That which the palmerworm has left has the locust eaten; and that which the locust has left has the cankerworm eaten, and that which the cankerworm has left has the caterpillar eaten.”

• **Joel 1:4**

These are insects.⁹ Some have said these insects denote Gentile nations. Look carefully, and you will find it means literal insects. This is the only way you can interpret it when the whole first two chapters are read:

“Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and howl, all you drinkers of wine [those who overindulge], because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation [of locusts] is come upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the cheek teeth [fangs] of a great lion.

⁸ This is another reason the prophecy has not yet occurred, but it will happen. A new Temple must be built in Jerusalem. The two witnesses of the Book of Revelation are associated with that Temple. The prophecy cannot happen tomorrow, and it will not occur until a Temple is built. Several verses in Joel talk about Levitical priests officiating in a Temple. *ELM*

⁹ Actually four different insect types are indicated in this disaster, as Joel 1:4 from the NET Bible translation indicates:

“What [1] the gazam-locust left [2] the ‘arbeh-locust consumed, what the ‘arbeh-locust left [3] the yeleq-locust consumed, and what the yeleq-locust left [4] the hasil-locust consumed!”

No one knows if these are four different insects or different life stages of a single species of locust. We will find out at some time in the future. What is clear is that each successive swarm eats what the previous swarm left behind. *DWS*

He has laid my vine [in Israel] waste, and barked my fig tree [removed the bark]: he has made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of YHWH [the Temple]; the priests, YHWH's ministers, mourn."

• *Joel 1:5–9*

This means **"the House of YHWH,"** the Temple,¹⁰ will not have enough food to sustain the ceremonial rituals.

"The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the corn [the grain] is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languishes. Be you ashamed, O you husbandmen [you farmers of Judah]; howl, O you vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished."

• *Joel 1:10–11*

This will occur within a single year. The land will be almost completely stripped of agricultural produce in and around the city of Jerusalem. This does not mean they will all die. They will survive, because the rest of the world will not be involved. Out of the north will come forth hordes of insects. Not from the south or the east where they normally come from, but from the north, which is most remarkable:

"The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languishes, the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also the apple tree. All the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

• *Joel 1:12*

Who will be living in this area at that time, during this one year?

"Gird yourselves, and lament, you priests [in the Temple]: howl, you ministers of the altar; come lie all night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify you a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of YHWH your God, and cry unto YHWH, Alas for the day!"

• *Joel 1:13–15*

Now notice this. It will lead right into something. **"... for the day of YHWH is at hand ..."** (Joel 1:15). It is not quite there yet — it is at hand. This will be a sign and a wonder to Israel to prepare for **"the day of the Lord,"** because this day will come soon after this happens, **"... and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it [the day of the Lord] come"** (Joel 1:15).

Revelation and Joel

If you go to chapter 6 of the Book of Revelation where the 6 seals are given, suddenly the 7th seal is introduced in chapter 7. Do you know what the 7th seal is? It lasts through the 16th chapter, inclusively, of the Book of Revelation, and it talks about destruction, after destruction, upon destruction. It is the wrath of the Father, and of Christ on this world. It is a destruction coming from them both.¹¹

In the midst and at the end of it, God will send His Spirit upon on all flesh and in the land, the daughters and the sons will then have visions and dreams, and interpretations that will show that God is not out of the picture at all. Afterward the sun will darken, and the moon, and so forth. You find this also in the Book of Revelation verses 8:12 and 9:2.

¹⁰ Later, **"the house of YHWH"** was called **"the House of the Name."** See my article "[A Name for the Temple of God.](#)" DWS

¹¹ If you are part of the family of God — if you are putting your trust in God the Father, and of Christ, why should He send any wrath on you? He does not need to have wrath on you, if you are practicing the principles of the biblical revelation. These destructions are put on people who are not practicing those things. We can suffer from them to a certain extent, but the point of view from the Scripture is this: God sends His wrath upon people who He says need His wrath. In this situation here, He will send this judgment upon Judah for only one year. It will be succeeded by events that lead directly to **"the day of the Lord."** ELM

See Dr. Martin's article, "[How to Fully Escape the Great Tribulation.](#)" DWS

Joel chapter 1 deals with this time period right on the horizon to us, which introduces the Day of the Lord into world affairs. At this time, it says:

“The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down, for the corn is withered. [Then later ...]

Blow you the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of YHWH comes [right on the heels], for it is nigh at hand [very close]!”

• *Joel 1:17 and 2:1*

The Jews at the time of Christ and the apostles were requiring signs. You want a sign? God shall give a sign. The sign is this: before the day of the Lord, there will be a massive destruction in and around Jerusalem caused by insects. Of course, this sounds impossible in our modern world. But I ask you this question, have we been able to control all the insects that come out of Africa today? Locust plagues come up occasionally, do they not? Our modern scientists, in many cases, cannot restrain these acts of nature.

Here we find a northern army being described, a most unusual thing, to come out of the north. A witness will occur to Israel and the world when this prophecy takes place, it will be the main signal to Israel that the Day of the Lord is at the threshold.¹²

Joel is giving a definite witness that God is in charge of His people Israel and of Jerusalem. When these events take place, when it comes to pass that a northern army of insects comes and strips the nation bare for one year, you will see the people of Israel, and the rest of the world, begin to say, “I believe there is a God after all.”

Destruction before the Day of the Lord

And you know, this is a fact. It will be when signs and wonders begin to matter. **“Blow you the trumpet in Zion,”** the **“holy mountain”** will be disturbed. Verse 2:

“A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong [people]. there has not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.”

• *Joel 2:2*

Those “people” happen to be insects, believe it or not. This event shall occur before the prophecy that Peter spoke about in Acts chapter 2.

You know, when Peter got up to teach the people of Jerusalem on Pentecost day, he knew from historical experience that this event had not yet taken place. This is why he picked Joel’s prophecy. When you get it in the Greek of Acts, he did not mean this prophecy was actually being fulfilled then, he meant this is what it will be like in that day. He was picking this prophecy and saying, what you see around us in the Temple, where prophesying is going on, is like that which Joel talked about.

But, if this is like what it shall be, we will see some mighty miracles take place in the coming years. The first and second chapters of Joel speak about modern times. Have you heard in history where a nation of insects, of all types of insects, have come against Israel, around Jerusalem, and stripped the whole country bare? Have you ever heard of it in history? Never. It has not happened yet. Therefore it will happen in the future. Once it happens, the result will be a whole year of devastation in that area of the world. It will be so severe that God will never bring it back again. This is what it says in verse 3:

¹² This has not happened yet. In fact, it says it will be so extraordinary that no one ever heard of anything like it before? Remember what the Book of Daniel says about the great tribulation? It also is something that occurs only once, and will never occur again. What did Jesus Himself say on the Mount of Olives, when He gave the Olivet prophecy? He said there will be coming a day of destruction, of tribulation. There will not be anything like it before, nor will it ever occur again. All these events are put together into a prophetic environment, and we are given more details by the prophet Joel. *ELM*

“A fire devours before them; and behind them a flame burns: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ...”

• **Joel 2:3**

This is what Joel says. This is not a prophecy of Ernest Martin. All I am doing is reading what the Scripture says. I can tell you as a historian, this never happened in history. Furthermore, the signs and wonders Joel talks about, they have not occurred in history either. No wonder the apostle Peter picked this prophecy to warn the Jews about what would occur.

True, Peter did think his generation would see these things happen, yet in the 40-year period from 30 AD to 70 AD (when the Temple was destroyed), these events of Joel did not occur.

Will Joel's Prophecies Occur?

Does this mean that Joel's prophecy will not take place? The apostle Peter said, in Second Peter

“... the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; ...”

• **2 Peter 3:7–10**

A day with the Lord is as a thousand years. Four thousand years had passed up to Peter's time. Two thousand have passed since the time of Christ. What are we coming to, just a few years in advance of us? We are coming to the 2,000th anniversary of the introduction of Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, when He came into the world.¹³

A window of opportunity is opening for all of us who love the Bible, to present not only the prophecies of the Bible, but also the grandeur and the wonders associated with the nativity of Jesus which God gave to the whole world at that time. At the introduction of Christ, even the Magi from the Eastern countries were inspired to come and give gifts to the newborn child.

I am convinced that in the next few years in advance of us, the same thing will happen again. Peace and security, and a time of refreshment and restoration will come. After the restoration comes, we will see this period of Joel occurring. Revelation chapters 6, 7, and 8 parallel and expand on Joel's prophecies. You will find the seven seals mentioned there. Then go back to Matthew chapter 24, the Olivet Prophecy of Jesus. The sequence of coming events will all begin to make sense.

Ernest L. Martin, December 1996
Edited by David Sielaff, January 2013

Skeletal Outline of the Book of Joel

Below is a very short outline of the Book of Joel from *The Bible Remembrancer: Containing an Analysis of the Whole Bible* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1848). This book, attributed to Rev. Ingram Cobbin, was published without author attribution. It contains outlines for every book of the Bible and has several interesting Bible lists and articles.

Outlines which accept the Bible as inspired are particularly useful. Outlines of books of the Bible provide details to the general skeleton of the Bible. Cobbin's outlines describe the obvious topics in each chapter. Here is Cobbin's short introduction to Joel:

¹³ That 2,000th anniversary was in 1998. DWS

“Little is known of this prophet; and it is an unsettled point as to whether he lived in the days of Uzziah, Manasseh, or Josiah — there being a difference of a century and three-quarters between the first and the last of these kings. His name may be taken to mean God is God.¹⁴ As no less than fourteen persons named in the Bible bore this name, it is well to note that the prophet was the ‘son of Pethual.’

Joel prophesied in Judah. The first chapter and ten verses of the second chapter are taken up with a very striking description of the destructive progress of a swarm of locusts. The invasion of these tiny spoilers was probably literal; but it was also emblematic of the devastation that would be caused by the invading host of the Chaldeans.

Joel’s remarkable prophecy ‘It shall come to pass that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,’ etc. (Joel 2:28–32), is quoted by Peter as having its fulfillment at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21). There are, however, many who anticipate a yet further and fuller fulfillment.”

• *Bible Remembrancer*, p. 71

Cobbin’s Outline of the Book of Joel

The locusts	1	Famine by locusts and caterpillars; God’s “great army”
	2	The trumpet of alarm sounded. Promises of mercy and grace
Valley of Jehoshaphat	3	The valley of Jehoshaphat; and judgments there on the enemies of Judah

David Dorsey’s Outline

In *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, Professor David Dorsey presents his useful structure of the Book of Joel in this manner¹⁵:

- a. Devastating locust invasion (1:2–14)
- b. Suffering of all creatures from the locust plague (1:15–20)
 - c. YHWH himself brings the locust army against Judah (2:1–11)
 - d. **CENTER:** call to repentance (2:12–17)¹⁶
- a’ Promise that devastation of locust invasion will be reversed (2:18–27).
- b’ Judah will experience YHWH’s spiritual blessings (2:28–32).
- c’ YHWH will bring the nations against Judah, but he will destroy them (in judgment) and restore Judah (3:1–21)

As Dorsey points out (as do most commentators) the first section (**a, above**) describing the locust plague (Joel 1:2–14) uses many attention-getting terms of alarm about this unique disaster which is prophesied, and

¹⁴ Joel is likely a contraction of YHWH-El, “Yo-El,” meaning “YHWH is El.” James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), p. 216. DWS

¹⁵ David Dorsey, “Chapter 28: Joel: Yahweh Thunders at the Head of His Army,” in *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grant Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1999), pp. 273–276. Again, I highly recommend this book for your personal study library.

In fact, the entire Bible has a structure, as shown in Dr. Martin book [Restoring the Original Bible: The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures](#). Remember, however, the chapter divisions in the Bible are not divinely inspired, so you can feel free to make your own determinations regarding structure within any Book of the Bible. DWS

¹⁶ Joel is the speaker from 1:1–2:17, then YHWH speaks from 2:18–3:21. DWS

still future.¹⁷ Each verb listed below uses the imperative mood in Hebrew. God is commanding Judah to comply with His demands. God’s destruction of the agriculture of Judah and Jerusalem is designed (1) to get their attention, and (2) to give them an opportunity to repent of their sins and their ways of living. God implores them by using the most forceful language He can use:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1:2) hear! — give ear! | (1:8) lament! |
| (1:3) tell! [future generations] | (1:11) be ashamed! — how! |
| (1:5) awake! — weep! — how! | (1:13) gird yourselves! — lament! — how! — come! — lie! |

Then the section concludes in verse 14, again with every Hebrew verb still in the imperative mood:

“Sanctify! you a fast, call! a solemn assembly, gather! the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of YHWH your God, and cry! unto YHWH.”

• Joel 1:14

Note the four groups of people addressed in these passages: [a] the elders and the inhabitants of the land (1:2, 14), [b] drunkards and wine drinkers (1:5), [c] priests and ministers (Levites, 1:9, 13), and [d] farmers and vinedressers and the children (1:3, 11) need to hear what God is saying through Joel! This is important information about a terrible plague which will come upon the land and people of Judah and Jerusalem.

Dorsey notes interesting relationships between information in sections *c* and *c'* above¹⁸:

Locust army led by YHWH Joel 2:10–11 KJV Day of YHWH is future, but near	Human army opposed by YHWH Joel 3:14–16 KJV Day of YHWH is occurring, NOW
<p>“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And YHWH shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is <u>strong</u> that executes his word:</p>	<p>“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for <u>the day of YHWH</u> is near in the valley of decision.</p> <hr/> <p>The sun and the moon shall be dark- ened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. YHWH also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake:</p>
<p>for [future] <u>the day of YHWH</u> is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?”</p>	<p>but YHWH will be the hope of his people, and [He is] <u>the strength</u> of the children of Israel.”</p>

Between Joel 2:10–11 and 3:14–16, Joel 2:30–31 also indicates signs in heaven and earth are again presented. These signs of Joel 2:30–31 occur specifically before the Day of YHWH, although fewer details are given than in 2:10–11 and 3:14–16:

¹⁷ In other words, God is speaking to Judah, Jerusalem, and to the world today about an event that is yet to occur. The resulting devastation will have a year-long effect. It will clearly demonstrate to the people of Judah and Jerusalem that God exists, He is present and active, and His words must be heeded or there will be severe consequences and punishment. Again, according to Joel, this occurs prior to the Day of the Lord, the Day of YHWH. Israel has always wanted to meet their God. As the Book of Amos, the next Book of the Twelve after Joel says: “**prepare to meet your God, O Israel!**” (Amos 4:12). They shall indeed do so. DWS

¹⁸ David Dorsey, “Chapter 28: Joel,” p. 276. DWS

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, BEFORE the great and the terrible day of YHWH come.”

• *Joel 2:30–31*

Except for the statement indicating a time sequence relative to “**the Day of YHWH,**” Joel 2:30–31 can be considered a restatement of Joel 2:10–11. So, are these three occurrences of signs in Joel separate instances of signs and wonders? No, the signs and wonders in Joel 2:10–11 and 2:30–31 describe the same instance from different perspectives, the first from the perspective of the prophet Joel, the second from YHWH’s perspective.

The priests were not teaching the people or giving them knowledge of YHWH from the Scriptures. The devastation of YHWH’s locust army threatens the Temple cult in Jerusalem. This destruction makes it impossible for the priests to serve in the Temple. All the grain to make bread has been destroyed, and so has fruit of the vine for wine.¹⁹

“Without grain or grape no offering can be made to YHWH and the priests, YHWH’s ministers, cannot perform their sacrificial duties for the people.”

• *Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, Hosea–Jonah, p. 221*

The land cannot produce, so the intermediaries to God, priests and ministers (the Levites), are forced to acknowledge that God is truly in charge of their actions. They must approach Him and repent.

The Day of YHWH in Joel

James Nogalski points out two insights, first about the Book of the Twelve (the Minor Prophets) and then about Book of Joel:

“Perhaps the most notable theme, the overwhelming majority of references to the ‘day of YHWH’ in the Hebrew Bible occur in the Book of the Twelve.”

• *Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, Hosea–Jonah, p. 11*

Five direct citations of the phrase “**the Day of YHWH**” (or “**the Day of the Lord,**” as the King James Version translates it) occur in Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31, and 3:14. These are the most in any book of the Bible.

“The Day of YHWH forms the literary, theological, and poetic backdrop throughout Joel, but the purpose and imagery of YHWH’s day changes dramatically as the book unfolds.”

• *Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, Hosea–Jonah, p. 208*

The Book of Joel and its central backdrop of “**the Day of YHWH,**” is the association which binds the Book of the Twelve, the Minor Prophets together as a single literary work composed of many parts by twelve separate authors. Although I quoted Nogalski in the “[January 2013 Newsletter](#),” I want to reference his important statement here again about the Book of Joel:

“Joel functions as the literary anchor for the entire corpus [of the Twelve Minor Prophets]. Joel begins with an extended call to repentance, precisely the way that Hosea ends; and it concludes with an eschatological portrayal of judgment against the nations, while Amos begins with an extended pronouncement of judgment against the nations. The fact that Joel 3:16, 18 contains the quotes from Amos 1:2 and 9:13 means that the end of Joel effectively cites the beginning and end of Amos.”

• *Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, Hosea–Jonah, p. 7, underlining mine*

¹⁹ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, pp. 205, 208. DWS

At first YHWH's people are threatened by a judgment from an army of insects led by YHWH Himself. Then, second, YHWH threatens the nations around Israel. His people are threatened because of their sins against Him. The nations are threatened because of their sins against His chosen people Israel. Joel 1:15, 2:1 and 3:14 all state **"the Day of YHWH"** is near, but while 1:15 and 2:1 threaten Jerusalem, YHWH in Joel 3:14 threatens judgment against the nations.²⁰

Joel's promise of future judgment upon the nations (Joel 3:1–21) who are injuring God's people is contingent upon the people's repentance (2:12–17). This repentance leads to the oracles mentioned at the end of Joel and detailed in the next Book of Amos in verses 1:2–2:16.²¹

Joel and Old Testament Intertextuality

The article "The Book of Joel" in the *Lexham Bible Dictionary* makes an interesting observation:

"The book of Joel is well-known for the quotation used by Peter in his speech at Pentecost in Acts 2:17–21. He quotes Joel 2:28–32, proclaiming that in the last days God's spirit will be poured out on all people, and 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' (Acts 2:21). Besides Acts, Joel is referenced infrequently in other books. Several verses in Joel are closely related to others:

- 1:15** Isaiah 13:6; Ezekiel 30:3
- 2:2** Zephaniah 1:15
- 2:3** Isaiah 51:3
- 2:32** Obadiah 17
- 3:16** Amos 1:2
- 3:18** Amos 9:13

Joel 3:10, with its command to beat plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears, gives the opposite message as Micah 4:3 and Isaiah 2:4."²²

This citation list can be expanded. Again, like Joel, other references present the same sequence: locust plagues are followed by draught, and then comes enemy attack by human. The locust swarm of Joel chapters 1 and 2 can be compared to Amos 4:6–11. Amos 8:9 shows cosmic signs and wonders just before the destruction of the northern Israelite Kingdom of Samaria. Nahum 3:15–16 discusses locusts, but there it speaks of the armies of Assyria and their devastation of the agriculture similar to Joel 2:1–11. In Habakkuk 1:7–11, the same symbols are repeated, but the dangerous antagonist has changed to the Chaldean (Babylonian) threat. And Joel 2:11 shows God leading an army just as He will do in Malachi 3:2 and 4:5.²³

Summation

Joel chapter 1 describes the literal insect invasion and its aftermath. Chapter 2:1–11 reveals that this army is cosmic and supernaturally led and guided by YHWH Himself. This army affects the land (Joel 2:3), the people (2:6), and even the cosmos (2:10). After this unique future devastating event, YHWH calls upon His people to repent. A heartfelt repentance will lead to almost immediate benefits: fertility of the land restored, the insect army removed, and the land and people beginning preparation for a life of service.²⁴ If the people do not repent, the next invasion will be men, not locusts. Proper repentance will lead to restoration and judgment of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2). God will be severe; Judah and Jerusalem will be saved.

David Sielaff, January 2013

²⁰ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, pp. 208–209. DWS

²¹ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, pp. 208, 212–213. DWS

²² Brenda Heyink, "Joel, Book of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012). DWS

²³ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, p. 212, 234. In the New Testament Revelation 9:7–10 reflects Joel chapter 2. DWS

²⁴ Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, p. 229–230. DWS