

## Book of Joel bible study notes and questions

**Overview:** Nothing is known about the prophet Joel except being the son of Pethuel. The name, Joel, means “The LORD is God;” “Jehovah is God.” The evidence from the text could suggest Joel might have been a priest. His ministry could have been exercised in or near Jerusalem in view of mentioning Judah (**3:1, 6, 8, 18, 19, 20**), Zion (**2:1, 15, 23, 32; 3:16, 17, 21**) and Jerusalem (**2:32; 3:1, 6, 16, 17, 21**).

There has been considerable difference of opinion by commentators over the dating of the prophecy from the ninth to fourth century BC and even later. However, Joel had known themes which had been recorded in Isaiah, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah and Malachi especially “*the day of the Lord*” (**1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14**). This could prove a later dating in view of themes known by Joel but the others prophets could have discovered the themes from Joel and therefore an earlier dating is possible. The earlier dating of the eighth or ninth century BC could be suggested from the nations involved in taking the Jewish people captive. There was no mention of the Assyrians who invaded completely the northern kingdom of Israel by about 720 BC and secondly of the Babylonians who took over all Israel by about 586 BC when they destroyed Jerusalem.

Joel did not expose the sin of Israel like the other prophets except in **1:5** to show that drunkenness was shown amongst many of the people who had a self-indulgent life-style. Israel had received divine retribution (**1:2-4, 6-12, 15-20**). The devastation of Israel had been shown in detail. One of the ways God had judged was by a locust invasion (**1:4**). It has been known for a swarm of locusts to number up to 600 million insects covering an area of 400 square miles. They look like big grasshoppers with heads like horses. When they descend on an area, they will eat vegetation having such an insatiable appetite to consume up to 80000 tons of food a day! Such a locust invasion by implication in **1:2** and **1:3** had not been known before. It was confirmation of the warning Moses gave to the children of Israel that they had been disobedient to God and therefore one of his judgments would be a locust invasion as written in **Deuteronomy 28:42**: “*All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.*” In **2:25** God had sent such a great swarm of locusts.

In **2:1-11** there was a warning given of a further judgment by another possible locust plague as shown by the advance of the locusts. They can crawl up walls as seen in the famous plague of 1915 in Jerusalem. This detailed description seems to fit with that of an invading army of locusts sent by God and not a military invasion although some commentators take the view of both a locust and a military invasion being foretold.

However, there was a call to repentance which Joel has written in some detail (**2:12-17**). Then there was shown the hope of restoration of Israel with God in the midst providing abundance of food and rain when needed (**2:18-27**). The prophet foretold the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh whatever background (**2:28-29**). Wonders will be known in the heavens and the earth before a time of great judgment but God will save anyone who will call on his name (**2:30-32**).

In chapter three there will be a glorious future for Israel as a nation. All Gentile nations will be judged for their treatment of the Jewish people. In the past God has judged Gentile nations for taking Jewish people into captivity (**3:3-8**). There is also a future fulfilment for all Gentile nations to be judged in the valley of Jehoshaphat (means The LORD judges) (**3:9-15**). The Lord shall be known by his presence in Jerusalem where there shall be holiness (**3:16-21**).

It is the author's belief that God has not finished with Israel as a nation having made unconditional promises that his people Israel were given his land FOR EVER where his presence will be known (**Isaiah 4:4-6**). Joel has written in the final chapter about a future fulfilment for Israel. To say that God has finished with Israel does not agree with the eternal promises he must fulfil for Israel as a nation (See **Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-16; 17:8; 22:17-18; 26:2-5; 28:3-4, 13-15; Deuteronomy 30:1-10; 2Samuel 7:8-17; 1Chronicles 17:7-15; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33**). He will one day make Israel a blessing to the whole earth in the coming millennial kingdom of 1000 years to come (**Revelation 20:1-6**). Israel shall be totally restored to the land for ever and the kingdom of God will become visible on earth when Jesus Christ returns to rule for 1000 years from Jerusalem (**Daniel 2:44**).

### Questions

The author has not intended to write a detailed commentary except to give some essential background information. The following questions can be attempted by individuals doing their own private study. They can be studied together in a small home group up to about twelve people. The group study could be overseen by a leader/coordinator/facilitator introducing the study and then opening up the discussion from everyone in the group. Some home groups may work perfectly well without a leader/coordinator/facilitator. What is recommended is for everyone to have the study material available beforehand so that each person has time where possible to do some personal study and to bring his/her contribution to the home group in answering the questions. The length of time in how long you take to cover all the questions will depend on how far the group wish to take in studying this book. You may wish to select which questions to attempt rather than cover every question. The use of concordances and other commentaries can be a helpful contribution to the study.

Whatever way you attempt this bible study, it is recommended to read through more than once the Book of Joel and take time to consider any important themes or words in this book. A time of prayer and worship is often of real benefit before starting the study.

### Section A

- 1) Read **chapter one** carefully and consider the state of Israel at that time.
- 2) What was known about the plague of locusts in **1:2-7**?
- 3) Why did the Lord not reveal much about the character of Joel? You may find the bible references to unknown people significant in reading **2Samuel 20:14-22; Matthew 18:5-13; Mark 5:25-34; 12:41-44; John 6:5-14**.
- 4) Study carefully what Joel reveals of who God is. See **2:13-14, 18, 21, 26-27, 31-32; 3:16-17, 21**.
- 5) What had the house of the Lord lost SPIRITUALLY in having no meat offering and no drink offering? See **1:9, 13; 2:14**.
- 6) Read carefully **2:1-11**. Does this passage show a description of God's judgment using a plague of locusts?
- 7) What does this book teach on repentance? See **1:8, 11, 13, 14; 2:12-17**.
- 8) What was God calling the nation of Israel to do in **2:12-17**?

### Section A continued

- 9) Show what God would do for Israel if the nation was restored. See **2:18-27**.
- 10) To what extent has the prophecy in 2:28-32 been fulfilled since Joel's time? See also **Acts 2:15-21**.
- 11) What were God's judgments on all nations? See **3:2-14**.
- 12) Is there evidence from the text that there is still a fulfilment of prophecy for Israel and the nations? See **3:16-21**.
- 13) Is it possible from the text that Joel could have been a priest in view of what is written in **1:9, 13, 14, 16; 2:14, 17; 3:18**?
- 14) Is there any evidence from the book when Joel wrote this prophecy? See **3:1-8, 12**.

### Section B

These questions may require further reading and study.

- 1) What is the allegorical view of **1:2-4** and **2:1-11**?
- 2) What is the apocalyptic view of **2:1-11**?
- 3) What is understood by "*The day of the Lord*"? See **1:15, 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14**. See also **Isaiah 2:10-22; 13:6-11; Zechariah 14:1-3; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1Thessalonians 5:2; 2Thessalonians 2:2; 2Peter 3:5**.
- 4) Find out **A)** Whether there is any evidence to prove an earlier date for the prophecy in the eighth or ninth century BC or **B)** Evidence for a later date in the fourth or fifth century BC after the exile of the Jews finished in 538 BC.

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