

Joel

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Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	The Locust Plague (1:1-13)	3
2.1	Look around - a tragedy to mourn (1-13)	3
2.1.1	Call to the Elders (2-4)	4
2.1.2	Call to the Drunkards (5-7)	5
2.1.3	Call to the City Dwellers (8-10)	6
2.1.4	Call to the Farmers (11-12)	8
2.1.5	Call to the Priests (13)	8
2.2	Look upward - A time of prayer (14-20)	9
2.2.1	Exhortation to repent (14)	9
2.2.2	Explanation - Significance of the plague (15-18)	10
2.2.3	Example set by Joel (1:19-20)	11
3	The Day of Healing (2:1-27)	11
3.1	Consider: A Vision of Judgment (2:1-11)	11
3.1.1	The Cry of Alarm (2:1)	11
3.1.2	The Description of the Disaster (2:2-11)	12

3.2	Repent: A Vision of Remorse (12-17)	15
3.2.1	The Nature of Repentance (2:12-13a)	15
3.2.2	Motive to Repentance (2:13b-14)	16
3.2.3	Prescription for Repentance (2:15-17)	18
3.3	Healing: A Vision of Restoration (2:18-29)	20
3.3.1	The Plague Removed (2:18-22)	20
3.3.2	The Coming Teacher (2:23-27)	22
4	The Day of the Spirit (2:28-3:21)	24
4.1	Restoration: Vision of Blessing (2:28-29)	24
4.1.1	The Outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-29)	24
4.2	Salvation: Vision of Deliverance (2:30-32)	25
4.2.1	Warning Signs (2:30-31)	25
4.2.2	Wondrous Salvation (2:32)	26
4.3	Vindication: Vision of Judgment (3:1-15)	27
4.3.1	Future Enemies (3:1-3)	27
4.3.2	Present Enemies (3:4-8)	28
4.3.3	All Enemies Summoned (3:9-11)	30
4.3.4	All Enemies Destroyed (3:12-15)	32
4.4	Glorification: A Vision of Ultimates (3:16-21)	34
4.4.1	The Strength of Zion (3:16)	34
4.4.2	The Holiness of Zion (3:17)	34
4.4.3	The Prosperity of Zion (3:18)	35
4.4.4	The Security of Zion (3:19-21)	36

1 Introduction

The Man: Joel means *Yahweh is God*. He was the son of Pethuel. The name means *persuaded of God*.

Background: A great locust disaster struck the southern kingdom of Judah during the time of the king Joash (835-796BC). Joel used this occasion to warn them of an impending greater judgment.

The Message: Joel spoke for genuine repentance. The unique prophecy of Joel covers messianic age from its beginnings in time and space to its culmination in eternity, from Pentecost to Paradise restored.

Eight aspects of the day of Yahweh, a major theme of Joel, includes: (1) the signs and wonders in heaven; (2) the day of Yahweh is eschatological as well as historical; (3) great judgment is associated with that day; (4) the final defeat and punishment of God's enemies; (5) the ultimate redemption of the remnant of believers; (6) the prominence of Zion; (7) Yahweh's triumphant and peaceful reign; and (8) the finality of this consummation (Smith).

Six element of New Jerusalem, another theme of Joel, includes: (1) the eternal safety of those who inhabit that city; (2) the holiness of Zion; (3) the absence of any stranger (unbeliever) there; (4) the presence of the river of the water of life; (5) the theme of eternal life; and (6) the fact that Zion is the habitation of Yahweh himself (Smith).

2 The Locust Plague (1:1-13)

2.1 Look around - a tragedy to mourn (1-13)

1:1. The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

Joel: the only fact given about Joel is that he was a son of Pethuel.

Word of the Lord: The prophet claim he has the word of God.

2.1.1 Call to the Elders (2-4)

1:2. Hear this, you elders, And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers?

Elders: Joel has a message to the nation. He calls for their leadership.

Has anything like this happened is rhetorical question expecting a negative answer. Such questions are intended for the audience to come to an independent evaluation of the situation. The disaster was unprecedented. Lord must be communicating something.

1:3. Tell your children about it, Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation.

your children . . . their children, and the next generation. This disaster was so severe that will be spoken of for generations to come and will not be forgotten.

1:4. What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

Locusts: Israel had been hit by a fourfold locust attack. Four Hebrew words are used to designate the locusts. They can refer to four waves of locusts, four species of locusts, or four stages of locusts' development. The main point is that the locusts have left the land barren. The Hebrew words, translations in NKJV, ESV, and NASB, their physical stage, and their eating habits are given below.

Gazam: Chewing, cutting, or gnawing locust are at hatchling stage which consumes tender ground vegetation.

Arbeh: Swarming locust are at hopper stage which completes the destruction of tender vegetation.

Yelek: Crawling or hopping or creeping locust are at winged hopper stage which attacks branches.

Hasil: Consuming or destroying or stripping locust are at mature stage which strips even bark of trees.

2.1.2 Call to the Drunkards (5-7)

1:5. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, Because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.

Awake: Exhortation to the drunkards is to come to senses and pay attention to what the Lord is communicating through this disaster.

Drunkards: They are least concerned about things happening around them, especially of the spiritual matters, as long as they have wine.

New wine: Also called as sweet wine is the first product of the winepress.

Cut off from you mouth: The locusts have destroyed wine plants and hence there is no wine.

1:6. For a nation has come up against My land, Strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.

Nation: Locusts are like a large army of the enemy nation coming against them.

Teeth of lion ...fangs of a fierce lion: The strength of the army of these locust is so strong it was compared to that of the strength and fierceness of a lion. They even consumed the barks of the fig trees grown along with vineyards.

1:7. He has laid waste My vine, And ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white.

My land ... My vine ... My fig tree: Lord owning the land is an indication of prayer for the relief from the destruction is heard by the Lord.

Stripped ...thrown ...made white: Even God is concerned about the devastation happened on the land/

2.1.3 Call to the City Dwellers (8-10)

1:8. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the husband of her youth.

Lament: The city dwellers are exhorted to lament looking at the present state of the city.

Lament ... virgin daughter: This verb is feminine singular and probably points to the city of Jerusalem. The people of this city are like virgin daughter.

Sackcloth: The calamity was so intense that they should cry like a young woman crying for her dead husband.

1:9. The grain offering and the drink offering Have been cut off from the house of the Lord; The priests mourn, who minister to the Lord.

Offering ... cut off: The disaster is so severe that the temple workshop was affected. These

Priests mourn: The reason is there is no material resources available for the sacrifices. They were commanded to give offering every day morning and evening.

Minister to the Lord: Even the ministry toward the Lord also affected for the priests had nothing to offer to the Lord.

1:10. The field is wasted, The land mourns; For the grain is ruined, The new wine is dried up, The oil fails.

Land mourns: Even the whole land is affected by this disaster.

Grain ... wine ... oil: These are the ingredients to be used for the temple worship.

2.1.4 Call to the Farmers (11-12)

**1:11. Be ashamed, you farmers, Wail, you vine dressers,
For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of
the field has perished.**

The **farmers** are those who own the land and the **vine dressers** are those working in the field. These are the ones who are affected immediately. They should be **ashamed** of and **wail** or cry since their crop is **perished**. This can be viewed as a withdrawal of the divine blessing.

**1:12. The vine has dried up, And the fig tree has withered;
The pomegranate tree, The palm tree also, And the apple tree—
All the trees of the field are withered;
Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men.**

Seven crops, **wheat**, **barley**, **vine**, **fig**, **pomegranate**, **palm**, and **apple**, are the major ones affected. The seven and **all** indicate complete destruction. Harvest time is the most joyful time of a farmer but now there is no **joy**.

2.1.5 Call to the Priests (13)

**1:13. Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you
who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sack-
cloth, You who minister to my God; For the grain offering
and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of
your God.**

Girding is symbolic of an exhortation for action. Priests should **lament** for the state of the land due to divine discipline. They

should remove their privileged priestly garments as [ministers](#) and put on the [sackcloth](#) which is symbolic of humbling themselves. Sackcloth is a thick dark cloth worn in mourning rites as an outward expression of deep sorrow. They should humble before the Lord who sends the locust which is an indication of divine displeasure. Disruption of the [grain offering](#) and [drink offering](#) halted their regular communion with God. Priests are responsible for the well being of the people and when that is not happening, they should be ashamed of it. The words [my God](#) and [your God](#) shows that Joel is on the side of God and distanced himself from the priests. It also shows his authority as a prophet over the priests.

2.2 Look upward - A time of prayer (14-20)

2.2.1 Exhortation to repent (14)

1:14. Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land Into the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

[Consecrate a fast](#) is an exhortation for the priest who were lamenting to initiate a national prayer accompanied with fasting. Fasting is a sign of humility, in in this context submission to the decreed calamity. Normally, only [elders](#) were called for meeting. Here, all the [inhabitants](#) were called which shows the importance of the meeting. They are to meet in the temple where the Lord dwells. [Cry out to the Lord](#) is necessary to avert any further destruction. Prayer accompanied by fasting is very effective when people gather with one accord.

2.2.2 Explanation - Significance of the plague (15-18)

1:15. Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel is explaining why the national assembly is required. **Alas for the day!** The expression shows that things are bad in Judah. They may get worse due to **the day of the Lord** which is impending destruction. The **day** need not be a 24 hour period. It refers to an event which is the **destruction** coming from the **Almighty**, the all powerful God.

1:16. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

Food was not available due to drought attack. Hence, the **joy and gladness** were also vanished from the temple.

1:17. The seed shrivels under the clods, Storehouses are in shambles; Barns are broken down, For the grain has withered.

The **seed shrivels** (became worthless) under the **clods** (soil) possibly due to lack of water. Because of this, there is no harvest of any **grains** and hence the **storehouses** and **barns** are destroyed.

1:18. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, Because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

The **groan** of the animals indicate that they also suffer. First the **cattle**, which are bigger one, are affected. Then, the smaller ones, **sheeps** are also affected. There were **punished** not because of their sin, but that of the humans.

2.2.3 Example set by Joel (1:19–20)

1:19. O Lord, to You I cry out; For fire has devoured the open pastures, And a flame has burned all the trees of the field.

I cry out: Joel set an example to the priests how to pray. This is one of the prophetic function: to intercede before God to avert the judgment of God.

1:20. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the open pastures.

Beasts . . . cry out: The animals cry out to their creator for His intervention since they do not have **water** to drink as the water sources are now **dried**. They also do not have food to eat as the land has become barren due to **fire**.

3 The Day of Healing (2:1-27)

Joel gives a strong warning anticipating a greater disaster due to the dreadful day of the Lord, .

3.1 Consider: A Vision of Judgment (2:1–11)

3.1.1 The Cry of Alarm (2:1)

2:1. Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand:

Trumpet: Through trumpet is called for various purposes, here it is for warning the people. Ancient days, the cities are guarded by watchmen who blew the trumpet to warn the people of the enemies approaching the city. Joel is like the watchman of the **Zion** which is Jerusalem.

The warning is for **all the inhabitants of the land** and they should **tremble**. The reason for this the coming of the **day of the Lord** which is judgment against them.

3.1.2 The Description of the Disaster (2:2–11)

2:2. A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations.

The day of the Lord is characterized by great calamities, especially **darkness**. The enemy is so **great** and so **strong** that it will be remembered for **many generations**.

2:3. A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land is like the Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.

A **fire** burned before and behind the enemy army. Fire symbolizes Yahweh's approach in judgment Fertile farmland, once like the **Garden of Eden**, would be reduced to desert. God's judgment through this army would be inescapable.

**2:4. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like swift steeds, so they run.**

Joel shifts to describing the judgment army itself. The army is likened to galloping [horses](#), resembling the earlier locusts. If tiny locusts overwhelmed Israel, Yahweh's war horses would be even more fearsome and are unstoppable.

**2:5. With a noise like chariots Over mountaintops they
leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the
stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array.**

Joel describes the terrifying sound of the coming army. It is compared to [chariots](#) in battle or a forest [fire](#) driven by wind, or like a facing an [array](#) of a [strong](#) army. These images make the loud buzzing of the locusts seem insignificant.

**2:6. Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are
drained of color.**

Joel describes how [people](#) panic when the judgment army arrives. Everyone is terrified and trembles with fear. This fear is connected to the [day of the Lord](#). The army is frightening because it signifies the presence of Yahweh himself.

**2:7. They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like
men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they
do not break ranks.**

The judgment army is powerful, disciplined, and unstoppable. Its soldiers move like mighty warriors, running, [climbing](#) walls, and [marching](#) in perfect [formation](#).

2:8. They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down.

It is a disciplined army. No one can halt this army, much like the unstoppable locust plague. Joel uses the locusts as an example of how terrible the Day of the Lord will be for sinners who don't return to God.

2:9. They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief.

The Lord's army will easily break into even the strongest cities. They will climb over walls and overcome all defenses. Like locusts, they'll get into every house, even through windows like a thief. Nothing will stop them from getting inside.

2:10. The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness.

When the Lord's army arrives to judge, the entire land will shake. The ground will tremble, and the sky will shudder. The sun, moon, and stars will stop shining. Joel uses these powerful images to show that judgment day will be dark and full of trouble.

2:11. The Lord gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?

Joel's description of the judgment army reaches its peak, revealing four key points. (i) **Lord** himself leads this **army**, no longer protecting Jerusalem but directing the attack. (ii) This large and powerful force is now called the Lord's **camp**. (iii) This army is strong because it carries out Lord's commands. (iv) All the events described earlier are part of the great and terrifying **Day of the Lord**, explaining why both people and the universe react with such fear.

Joel concludes his warning about the Day of the Lord by asking, **Who can endure it?** This question highlights that the people of Judah are too weak to face God's fierce army, especially since they struggled against mere insects before. However, Joel isn't leaving them without hope; he plans to answer this question in the next part of his message.

3.2 Repent: A Vision of Remorse (12-17)

3.2.1 The Nature of Repentance (2:12–13a)

2:12. “Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

Now: The approaching **Day of the Lord** and its crisis demand immediate action. Joel emphasizes that people must act now because this is their last chance to avoid the coming judgment. If they fail to follow God's command immediately, they will be completely destroyed.

Says (declares) the Lord: Joel's call for action is not just a practical idea to delay disaster; it is the direct command of the

Lord. He uses the solemn phrase [Says the Lord](#) to show this is a divine message. The fact that God himself invites repentance means that true change can indeed calm his holy anger.

[Turn to Me](#): In this context this phrase means going back to God after straying. It implies restoring a broken relationship with Him, not just turning in His direction. God is calling His people to fully re-establish their spiritual connection. Biblical repentance is far more than just feeling sorry or confessing sins. It's a complete change of heart and life purpose, where one truly reject all sin and fully commit to God.

[fasting, weeping, mourning](#): True, deep repentance naturally leads to outward actions. In ancient Israel, this meant showing humility and sadness through fasting, weeping, and lamentation. Fasting showed self-denial, submission to God, and seriousness in prayer. Weeping and lamenting expressed genuine sorrow for one's sins.

Note: Joel doesn't list specific sins for Israel to repent of. It seems god expects the people to look within themselves to find the sins that are causing their suffering, trusting that a truly humble person will quickly discover what offends the Lord.

3.2.2 Motive to Repentance (2:13b–14)

2:13. So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

Rend your heart: Their return to God must be complete and from the heart, not just for show. While fasting and weeping are good, they must be genuine and not just outward acts. God wants them to go beyond simply tearing their clothes, a traditional sign of sadness. Instead, He calls them to **rend your heart and not your garment**, meaning they need a deep, inner change of will and a strong desire to obey Him.

God always offers strong reasons for sinners to change. **Lord (Yahweh):** First, He reminds them of His powerful name, Yahweh. This name was very important to the Israelite's because it recalled how He freed them from Egypt and made a covenant with them. Thinking of Yahweh's name brought back memories of His past rescues and blessings.

Your God: Second, the phrase 'your God' highlights the special bond between Israel and Yahweh. They were uniquely connected, like a married couple. Even though Israel had become sinful and rebellious, they were still His people.

Gracious and merciful: Third, Joel describes Yahweh's nature: He is **gracious and merciful** to those who seek Him. **Gracious** means He shows favor, and **compassionate** means He cares like a parent. He is also **slow to anger**, showing great patience, and **great kindness**, meaning He consistently performs kind deeds to uphold His relationships.

relents from doing harm: Fourth, Joel reminds his audience that Yahweh can change His mind about disaster, withdrawing or delaying a threatened punishment when His people change.

2:14. Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him— A grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

He will turn and relent: Fifth, sometimes God not only withholds deserved punishment (mercy) but also gives undeserved blessings (grace). Joel can't promise this will happen now, but God's character and past actions suggest that if Israel truly repents, He might return to a positive stance and relent from both the current trouble and any worse calamity to come.

Leave a blessing: God is in control, and we can't always predict His actions based on the past. God might still leave enough **grain** and **drink (wine)** for temple offerings, showing that worship remained crucial even in a dark time. The people, under judgment, must humbly face it and hope for God's mercy.

3.2.3 Prescription for Repentance (2:15–17)

2:15. Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly;

Joel exhorted the priests what steps should be taken to demonstrate national repentance. It is repetition of 1:14 and 2:1. They should (i) blow the trumpet in Zion; (ii) sanctify a fast; and (iii) call an assembly.

2:16. Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room.

They should **sanctify** the congregation, specifically make complete preparations for worship. In OT this involves abstaining from work, food, and sexual relations. The holy **assembly** should include the entire population: (i) the people, (ii) the elders, (iii) the children, (iv) the infants, (v) the newly married, and (vi) the priests.

Note: Even the children and infants included in the assembly. Do not underestimate the capacity of the children to relate to God and participate in the spiritual activities.

2:17. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ ”

The priests, who usually led joyful festivals, are now called to lead the nation in mourning. They should stand in the temple court, between the porch and the altar, and offer prayers for the people.

Content of the prayer is important. It has two main requests: first, a strong plea for Yahweh to **Spare your people!** and second, **Where is their God?**, meaning a request that Yahweh prevent them from being shamed by foreign nations ruling over

them. The main goal of the prayer is to prevent Jerusalem's destruction by surrounding nations.

3.3 Healing: A Vision of Restoration (2:18–29)

Joel expect Yahweh would respond to the prayer of repentance. The immediate result would be the removal of the locust plague. In the more distant future, God would send a wonderful teacher to those who receive him.

3.3.1 The Plague Removed (2:18–22)

2:18. Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people.

Then the Lord: This section marks a turning point in the argument of the book. It describes the divine response to the nation's repentance. He would be **zealous** for his land, driving out the locusts which were devastating it. He would then take **pity** on his people.

2:19. The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

Behold: The word express an imminent action. Lord would meet their physical needs by providing **grain**, **wine**, and **oil**. Once the people have fully satisfied them, the **reproach** of the land and people would be removed.

**2:20. “But I will remove far from you the northern army,
And will drive him away into a barren and desolate land,
With his face toward the eastern sea And his back toward
the western sea; His stench will come up, And his foul
odor will rise, Because he has done monstrous things.”**

Joel prophesied that God would end the devastating locust plague, which, like a real army, had come from the [north](#). God would drive these locusts into the dry desert between the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and the western sea (Mediterranean Sea). The smell of the dead locusts, though normally unpleasant, would be a welcome relief to the people who had suffered so much.

**2:21. Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the Lord
has done marvelous things!**

This ultimate destruction of the locusts would encourage believers to proclaim that God had accomplished great things for them. Hence, there is no reason to fear. Instead, they should be [glad and rejoice](#).

**2:22. Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the
open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its
fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.**

[Do not be afraid you beasts](#): The creator respond to the cry of the creation. If he respond to the cry of animals, how much more we would be heard. [Beats of the field](#): Animals were also affected by the locusts.

After a time of suffering, even the animals would find plenty of food. The land, once barren, would become green and fertile again, and trees that couldn't produce fruit would now bear fruit. This change happens because [repentance](#), or turning back to God, opens the door to God's generous blessings.

3.3.2 The Coming Teacher (2:23–27)

2:23. Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you— The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month.

Joel exhort the people to [rejoice](#) along with the rest of the creation for the deliverance, but ultimately in the [in the Lord your God](#). The word [former rain](#) can be best translated as [teacher of righteousness](#) though modern translation render this as [former rain](#). However, Young's literal translation render this verse like this: [And ye sons of Zion, joy and rejoice, In Jehovah your God, For He hath given to you the Teacher for righteousness . . .](#)

Jews and early Christians refers this to a Messianic hope and the resulting prosperity. The Messiah would (i) a great teacher, similar to how God himself teaches, (ii) be a special gift from God to his people, (iii) bring everlasting righteousness, and (iv) usher great blessings and prosperity, like abundant rain making the land fertile.

2:24. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

Through this rain he would give to the land fertility and life. It results in abundance of [wheat](#), [wine](#), and [oil](#).

2:25. “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

All the painful past will be forgotten when the day of great blessing arrives. Lord would compensate for what was lost. Instead of the locusts eating the crops, God's people would have abundance of food.

2:26. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

Lord would provide abundance and satisfaction so that they would praise Him as source of all these blessing. [Application](#): When the Lord blesses you, never become proud and think you're better than others. Instead, humbly praise the Lord for his goodness and mercy.

2:27. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

Never again would God's people will be [ashamed](#) because of the momentary displeasure of the Lord. The presence of the Lord would be evident because of the prosperity. [Prayer](#): Lord, when your discipline brings me shame, help me to repent and experience your lifting me up.

4 The Day of the Spirit (2:28–3:21)

Gentiles would ask if God's plan to save the Jews truly ended during their hard times. However, Joel promises that despite suffering and exile, God's people will ultimately be restored, saved, proven right, and honored. This would be accomplished by the Spirit of God.

4.1 Restoration: Vision of Blessing (2:28–29)

After the coming of the Messiah, God promised to send His Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. OT prophets saw the Spirit as a key sign of the messianic age. This portion explores what that coming of the Spirit would mean.

4.1.1 The Outpouring of the Spirit (2:28–29)

2:28. “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

The promise that the Spirit would be poured out figuratively means an abundant gift from the Holy Spirit. This was literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). All flesh means all kind of people, regardless of background, gender, age, or social standing, can receive this gift through faith. Prophecy, dreams, and visions refers to the new revelation concerning His will to the people.

2:29. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Even lowly servants or slaves, both [menservants](#) and [maidser-vants](#), would receive the Spirit in those days. Today, we know, this refers to the church age.

A Note on The Fulfillment of the Prophecy: The Apostle Peter declared that the event of Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy about the Holy Spirit being [poured out](#). When people heard the apostles speaking in many languages, some thought they were drunk. Peter explained that it was the arrival of the age of the Holy Spirit just as Joel had foretold. Those present understood that Joel's prophecy was much bigger than just what happened that day. Promising the Spirit for [all flesh](#) means people from all nations, not just those present. This marked the beginning of the Holy Spirit's age, a truth proven when Gentiles like Cornelius's household and Philip's daughters also received the Spirit and prophesied, just like the apostles.

4.2 Salvation: Vision of Deliverance (2:30–32)

The arrival of the Messiah and the pouring out of the Spirit would also bring a period of judgment. Many people would reject both the Messiah's message and the Spirit's guidance, which would lead to severe consequences. This judgment would be announced by warning signs. However, those who sought the Lord would be spared from this judgment.

4.2.1 Warning Signs (2:30–31)

2:30. [“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.](#)

Before a time of judgment, there would be warning signs in both the [heaven](#) and on [Earth](#), urging people to change their ways. On Earth, there would be [bloody](#) wars, burning cities, and [smoke](#). Jesus also warned about these wars and signs, telling his followers to flee Jerusalem before its destruction. This prophecy was literally fulfilled when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem around A.D. 68-70, and during this time, early Christians escaped the violence by fleeing the city. Nevertheless, every judgment in history foreshadows the final judgment that ends time and begins eternity.

2:31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

In the heavens [the sun will be turned to darkness](#) and [the moon to blood](#). This happened literally during the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in A.D. 70. Jewish historians testify of the ominous heavenly signs were witnessed by both Jews and Romans.

4.2.2 Wondrous Salvation (2:32)

2:32. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

Before the dreadful events above [whoever calls upon the name of Yahweh will be delivered](#). Lord's [calling](#) involves faith, repentance, and transformation. On the day of Pentecost Peter quoted these verses from Joel. He urged those Jewish sinners to [be saved from this perverse generation](#) (Acts 2:40).

The remnant: Those who are saved would be gathered into a body. In OT language Joel is announcing the establishment of the NT church. Note that **Mount Zion** and **Jerusalem** are type of church in the OT. The temple in Jerusalem is where the Lord dwells in the OT and it is in the church that the Lord dwells in the NT. Similar prophecy was also made in Obadiah 17 **And on Mount Zion will be those who escape.**

4.3 Vindication: Vision of Judgment (3:1–15)

God's people look forward to a great future where their enemies are removed. The word **For** connects this future to his previous prophecies in chapter 2, showing that the glorious salvation he mentioned will be expanded upon. The phrase **in that day and at that time** links these events to the period after the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. However, using **days** suggests this is a longer period, making it impossible to pinpoint these judgments to specific historical events.

4.3.1 Future Enemies (3:1–3)

3:1. “For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,

Bring back the captives: This phrase is more than the restoration from the captivity. It shows an elevation of the dignity of the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

3:2. I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.

However, Gentiles ([all nations](#)) will be brought to the [valley of Jehoshaphat](#), a symbolic place representing the defeat of God's enemies and the rescue of His people (2 Chr 20:1–30). God will similarly defeat all future Gentile nations who attack His people.

[I will enter into judgment](#) is a phrase indicating that the Lord will defend His people before the Gentiles. His people will be called [Israel](#) indicating their relation as sons of God.

Three charges are leveled against the Gentiles nations. (i) They had scattered Israel, which happened during the time of Assyria and Babylon. (ii) Enemies [divided the land](#) meaning the invading army confiscated the captured land.

3:3. They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy as payment for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

(iii) [They have casted the lots](#) where the Lord's people were treated as cheap property. Little [boys](#) were sold as payment for prostitution. Little [girls](#) were reduced to the value of wine consumed by drunkards.

4.3.2 Present Enemies (3:4–8)

3:4. “Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head;

Before detailing the final judgment, Joel highlights the strong hatred from neighboring nations like Phoenicia and Philistia. Even though these nations were powerful, God saw them as worthless. He wasn't impressed by their military or commercial strength. **Retaliate:** The point is that to attack God's people is to attack God. He promised to swiftly punish their hateful actions against Judah.

3:5. Because you have taken My silver and My gold, And have carried into your temples My prized possessions.

God acts as both a prosecutor and a judge against the nations of Philistia and Phoenicia. He angrily questions them and then declares their punishment. These nations are accused of two main things. (i) They looted God's temple, taking His gold, silver, and treasures to decorate their own pagan temples. This act was seen as a sign that their false gods had defeated the God of Israel.

3:6. Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem You have sold to the Greeks, That you may remove them far from their borders.

(ii) Joel also strongly criticizes the neighboring nations for selling Jewish people into slavery to Greek traders. This was a great sin, made even worse because the captives were sent so far away from their homeland, making it almost impossible for them to return. These nations had no right to take away God given land and freedom.

3:7. "Behold, I will raise them Out of the place to which you have sold them, And will return your retaliation upon your own head.

God's judgment against Philistia and Phoenicia would be fitting. He would awaken and empower the captive Jews in distant lands, perhaps both spiritually and physically, as seen when Alexander the Great and his successors freed many Jews. Through this revived Jewish community, God would repay these nations for the indignities they inflicted.

3:8. I will sell your sons and your daughters Into the hand of the people of Judah, And they will sell them to the Sabeans, To a people far off; For the Lord has spoken."

Philistines and Phoenicians would be sold as slaves to wealthy Jews, who would then sell them further to the Sabeans in the desert.

Note: This passage describes how God will reverse the mistreatment of His people. However, it doesn't mention the sin of looting His temple. This omission might subtly suggest that, to God, people are more important than possessions. The warnings to Philistia and Phoenicia conclude with a powerful declaration: **Thus has Yahweh spoken**. The promised restoration is not a mere human idea or Joel's personal desire, but a solemn command directly from God. **Application:** God values and honors his people, though he may discipline them.

4.3.3 All Enemies Summoned (3:9–11)

3:9. Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, Let all the men of war draw near, Let them come up.

Joel announces the coming doom for all who attack God's people. Messengers, likely angels, will summon all Gentile nations to prepare for a massive war, challenging them to attack Jerusalem. This would be the final confrontation between good and evil.

3:10. Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, 'I am strong.' ”

The call to battle is full of irony: the conflict is so serious that enemies are urged to turn their farm tools into weapons, gathering every possible soldier, even the weak.

3:11. Assemble and come, all you nations, And gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord.

All nations . . . all around: This represents a total mobilization of all forces—physical, spiritual, and intellectual—that have ever opposed God's people. These hostile forces, who have often attacked Jerusalem individually, will now unite and rush back to the place of their past sins, where they will meet their destruction.

Cause Your mighty ones: It is Joel's prayer when this massive enemy army approaching Jerusalem. He asks God to use His invisible armies to defeat the enemies of the Lord. At this point, it becomes clear that this call to battle is actually a summons to the destruction of the enemies.

4.3.4 All Enemies Destroyed (3:12–15)

Following his call for the nations to assemble against Jerusalem, Joel presents four pictures which reveal what would befall those enemies. These include: (i) A judicial scene in 3:12, (ii) A harvest scene in 3:13, (iii) A crowd scene in 3:14, and (iv) An astronomical scene in 3:15.

3:12. “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

(i) **A judicial scene:** The first scene describes a judgment in the **valley of Jehoshaphat**, where the Lord himself calls hostile nations to gather. There, God will sit as judge over all surrounding nations, not just to hear their problems, but to deliver and carry out their condemnation and punishment. This shows God as the ultimate king of all nations. While not explicitly stated, the context suggests this judgment will come through war, as the Old Testament often shows God using war to bring justice against wicked peoples.

This scene of armies being destroyed might be inspired by an event in 2 Chronicles 20. In that story, a group of enemies planning to invade Judah were destroyed by God in the valley of Jehoshaphat before Judah’s army even arrived. The message is clear: anyone who tries to harm God’s people will face a similar fate.

3:13. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great.”

(ii) A **harvest scene**: The second image describes a vineyard ready for harvest. Angels are told to **put in the sickle** and gather the grapes, which are ripe for crushing in a wine press. Both the cutting of the grapes and their crushing symbolize punishment. The overflowing juice in the wine vat represents the great sin of these nations.

3:14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

(iii) A **crowd scene**: **multitudes, multitudes**: The third image shows a vast, noisy crowd filling what Joel calls the **valley of decision** or **Verdict Valley**. This is the same place as the **valley of Jehoshaphat** mentioned earlier. Here, God will make the final decision about the fate of these enemies. This moment represents **the day of Yahweh**, the ultimate judgment that all past historical judgments have foreshadowed.

3:15. The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.

(iv) An **astronomical scene**: The fourth image depicts a scene of cosmic judgment: the sun, moon, and stars go dark. This darkness, a common biblical sign of final judgment, suggests that nature itself is horrified by God's approaching judgment. Joel doesn't describe the bloodshed of the Gentile attack on Zion in detail; instead, he shows the reaction of the heavens. If even the sun, moon, and stars recoil from God's presence, then humans stand no chance of success. Thus, the darkening skies signal a terrible slaughter that creation itself cannot bear to witness.

4.4 Glorification: A Vision of Ultimates (3:16–21)

The final verses of Joel clearly show two different futures: the wicked will face ruin, while the righteous will receive God's abundant blessings. Zion, representing God's people, will enjoy great prosperity, while its enemies will be utterly destroyed.

4.4.1 The Strength of Zion (3:16)

3:16. The Lord also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the Lord will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

God's powerful voice, previously heard during the locust plague, now thunders again, signaling the doom of Jerusalem's attackers. This mighty sound comes from Zion, the place where God reveals himself on Earth, causing both heaven and earth to tremble. However, for His true people, God is a safe [shelter](#) and a strong [strength](#) offering both strength and hope.

4.4.2 The Holiness of Zion (3:17)

3:17. "So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again."

[You shall know](#): The main purpose of God's actions with the nations on [the day of Yahweh](#) is for everyone, especially His chosen people, to understand His special bond with Israel. Zion

is God's holy mountain, and the entire city would become His sacred dwelling place.

Holy: Because God lives there, Zion would be holy, meaning it belongs completely to God, the God of the covenant, rather than emphasizing its purity. This makes the city a safe haven for all of God's people.

Aliens: No strangers or unholy individuals would ever pass through Zion again. There is NT connection: **Rev 21:27**. **But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**

4.4.3 The Prosperity of Zion (3:18)

3:18. And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord And water the Valley of Acacias.

In that day: Joel concludes his prophecy by showing a complete reversal of the hardships God's people once faced. He describes the messianic age as a time of immense agricultural abundance for Zion. Those who find refuge there will have plentiful provisions, a stark contrast to the previous poverty caused by locusts and drought.

Drip with wine: Where there was once a lack of wine, Joel now foresees rivers of grape juice, and cattle producing so much milk it seems to flow from the ground. **Flowing with milk and honey:**

The land will once again be flowing with milk and honey, symbolizing its lush pastures and abundant vines. This agricultural prosperity in OT prophecy often represents the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant age. **Brooks ...flooded with water:** Even the dry riverbeds will flow year-round, showing how divine blessing replaces the earlier curse.

A fountain ...from the house of the Lord: A life-giving spring will emerge from the house of Yahweh. Though the physical temple in Joel's time suffered and offerings ceased, Joel envisions a future where God's temple becomes a source of fertility. He's not speaking of a physical building, but rather the heavenly sanctuary of God, represented on Earth by the church.

Valley of Acacias: This temple stream would water the valley of Acacias, a symbolic dry and infertile place. Joel is using this imagery to announce that the Gospel would bring new life to a dying world, a theme later echoed by other prophets and in the book of Revelation.

4.4.4 The Security of Zion (3:19–21)

3:19. "Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate wilderness, Because of violence against the people of Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Egypt ... Edom: While God's people enjoy immense blessings, unbelievers, represented by Egypt and Edom, will face desolation. These nations symbolize all worldly powers that oppose God experiencing a destruction. Their punishment is due to two main reasons: they acted violently against God's people and shed innocent blood.

3:20. But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation.

Judah shall abide forever: The goal of this divine judgment on Egypt and Edom is to ensure God's people can live in peace. While worldly kingdoms face ruin, Judah shall be inhabited forever, Jerusalem for all generations, contrasting eternal life with eternal death in Old Testament terms.

3:21. For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; For the Lord dwells in Zion.

Acquit . . . dwells: The eternal existence of Judah and Jerusalem will be secured in two ways. First, God will forgive their blood guilt, meaning all sins worthy of death, declaring spiritual Jerusalem innocent. Second, God himself will continue to dwell in Zion, providing lasting permanence to that holy place.

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