

JOEL: THE JUDGMENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

I: God's Judgment Of Judah With A Locust Plague

(Joel 1:1-20)

I. Introduction

- A. "The Day of the Lord," a term used of the time when God administers judgment on sin and deliverance for His people, can be applied to an event in Israel's past history as well as the end times.
- B. Joel's prophecies, written likely when young King Joash ruled under the regency of priests (835-796 B. C.), deal with both uses of this term, the existence of a locust plague in Joel's era that prefigured a military invasion in the Great Tribulation. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1258, "Introduction to the Book of Joel.")
- C. We view the locust plague in Joel 1:1-20 for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Judgment Of Judah With A Locust Plague, Joel 1:1-20.

- A. The Mosaic Covenant provided that if Israel violated God's Law, He would punish her in various ways, including destruction by locusts (Deuteronomy 28:42) and/or by an invading army (Deuteronomy 28:49-51).
- B. Where Joel 1:1-20 reported of God's judgment in Joel's day by a locust plague (Ibid., fn. to Joel 1:4), Joel 2:1-17 predicted God's judgment by an invading army in the end time "Day of the Lord" (Ibid., fn. to Joel 2:1-11).
- C. Joel 1:1-12 describes the great destruction on Judah that occurred with the locust plague as follows:
 1. What had just occurred was unique, what had never yet happened nor ever would occur again, Joel 1:1-3.
 2. A locust plague by four varieties of locusts had hit Judah, with the shearing locust coming followed by the swarming locust that was in turn followed by the lapping locust that in turn was followed by the devouring locust, leaving the plant life in Judah utterly destroyed, Joel 1:4; Ibid., fn. to Joel 1:4.
 3. Those who were drunk with wine in Judah were to lament since the locusts had cut off the grapevines that produced more wine, Joel 1:5. A nation of locusts beyond number had invaded and laid waste the vine and the fig tree, stripping off the bark to where the branches were laid bare and white, Joel 1:6-7 ESV.
 4. The people were to grieve like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the deceased bridegroom of her youth, for the grain offering and drink offering were cut off even from the temple of the Lord due to the total devastation by the locusts, Joel 1:8-9. The fields had been destroyed, the ground mourned because the grain was destroyed, the wine was dried up and the olive oil languished, Joel 1:10 ESV.
 5. Those who tilled the soil were to be ashamed, the vinedressers were to wail, for the wheat and barley, the harvest of the field, had perished, Joel 1:11.
 6. The grapevine was dried up, the fig tree languished, the pomegranate, palm and apple trees, all the trees of the field were dried up to where gladness had been dried up from the people of the land, Joel 1:12 ESV.
- D. Accordingly, since Deuteronomy 28:42 in the Mosaic Covenant indicated that God had used this severe locust plague to punish the nation for sin, Joel called for repentance from the people of Judah, Joel 1:13-14 ESV:
 1. He called the priests, ministers of the altar, to put on sackcloth and enter the temple to spend the night there because the grain and drink offerings were being withheld from the temple of their Lord, Joel 1:13.
 2. Joel urged that they call for a fast and a solemn assembly, to gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the temple of the Lord their God and there cry out in repentance for deliverance, Joel 1:14 ESV.
- E. In Joel 1:15-18 ESV, God's prophet continued to grieve over the devastation that had occurred, Ibid., p. 1259:
 1. The Day of the Lord was upon them, having come from Almighty God, Joel 1:15.
 2. The food had been cut off before their eyes, joy and gladness even from the house of their God, Joel 1:16.
 3. The sown seed shriveled under dry dirt clods, the storehouses were desolate, the granaries were torn down since the grain was dried up, the animals groaned, the cattle were perplexed because there was no pasture and even the sheep who usually found sparse plant life to eat suffered a lack of food, Joel 1:17-18 ESV.
- F. The prophet Joel himself called out unto the Lord over the devastation he himself beheld, Joel 1:19-20 ESV:
 1. Joel cried out to the Lord, for the locust plague like a fire had devoured the pastures of the wilderness, the figurative flame of the plague had figuratively burned all the trees in the field, Joel 1:19.
 2. Even animals of the field panted for the Lord, for the water brooks were dried up and the figurative fire of the locust plague had devoured even the sparse pastures of the wilderness, Joel 1:20.

Lesson: In punishing Judah for violating the Mosaic Law, God had sent a severe locust plague to denude the land, leading his prophet Joel to call the nation to repent and to petition the Lord for deliverance from His punishment.

Application: If we face a great trial, may we examine our hearts to see if we have sinned, and if so, may we repent.