

Bible Survey - Joel

by Peter Hammond

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and restoration, highlighting the promise of salvation and the call to turn to God with all one's heart.

Topics: "Repentance And Restoration", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Peter Hammond preaches on the prophetic book of Joel, focusing on the themes of repentance, restoration, and the promise of salvation through calling on the Name of the Lord. Joel, a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, warned of impending judgement and the need for national repentance amidst natural disasters and man-made calamities. The message emphasizes the importance of true repentance, a change of heart, mind, and life, as well as the restoration and blessings that follow revival. The sermon culminates in the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the assurance that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

Transcript

"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

Joel 2:32

Who was Joel?

Joel, the son of Pethuel, prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the 9th century B.C, while Hosea was prophesying to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As a young man Joel would have been exposed to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Joel is one of the earliest of the written prophets. Joel means "Jehovah is my God." Joel focuses on the Holiness and Judgement of God.

The Historic Context

The books of 1 and 2 Kings provide the historic background for the ministry of Joel. While Joel refers to priests, there is no reference to a king. Between 841 to 835 B.C. Queen Athalaih ruled Judah. Athalaih had been the Queen Mother and when her son died she seized the throne and murdered all of her grandsons, except for Joash, who was hidden in the Temple, by the High Priest, to preserve the line of David. Athalaih was the daughter of the notorious Jezebel, the enemy of the prophet Elijah. Jezebel had wrought havoc in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. After Joel's prophecy calling for national repentance had

been delivered, the people gained the courage to depose Athaliah and place 7-year-old Joash on the throne.

A Plague of Locusts

The prophecy of Joel begins with a natural disaster. A plague of locusts had devastated the country. Swarms of locusts of up to 600 million insects have been recorded, eating up to 80,000 tonnes of food a day, travelling at a speed of 16 kilometres a day and laying 5,000 eggs per square foot. In North Africa, where such swarms are common, they can blot out the sun and make midday seem like midnight. They can not only strip trees of their leaves but of their bark as well. "What the chewing locusts left, the swarming locusts have eaten; what the swarming locusts left the crawling locust has eaten; what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten." Joel 1:4. In Exodus 10 the 8th plague (of locusts) was sent by God on Egypt. In Deuteronomy 28 the Lord warned that one of the curses of disobedience would be plagues of locusts.

When Disaster Strikes

When the Lord was questioned about the man-made disaster of Pontius Pilate sending in his soldiers to kill zealots in the Temple, He responded: "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners... I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:2. The Lord then referred to the fallen tower in Siloam in which 18 people died. He said: "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:5

National Repentance

Every earthquake, hurricane, drought and flood is a reminder to us of the frailty of life and of our need to be right with God. It was in the context of natural and man-made disasters that the Lord declared: "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My Name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Ruined Harvest

The nation of Judah faced drought, bushfires and starvation. The economy came to a standstill. Joel's prophecy was given at the time of harvest, The Feast of Tabernacles. At the very time when they should have been celebrating the harvest of their crops, they were mourning the devastation of the plague of locusts. "Awake, you drunkards and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine that has been cut off from your mouth." Joel 1:5 "The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails." Joel 1:10. Joel describes present desolation and future danger.

Call a Sacred Assembly

Joel calls the nation to repentance: "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." Joel 1:13. Joel makes clear that Salvation is not automatic as if a nation as a whole can be saved by being Hebrew. God calls people to be saved through faithful messengers and people, in turn, must call on God, turn to God and turn from sin.

Blow the Trumpet

"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." Joel 2:1. But the people failed to repent after the plague of locusts and so, in chapter 2, Joel warns of another plague of a huge invading force that will march into the land and destroy everything.

Babylonian Invasion Prophesied

In arresting, vivid, descriptive and picturesque words Joel described calamity and catastrophe which will bring devastation and desolation to the land. In the past, the people of Israel had been invaded by Phoenicians, Philistines, Edomites, Sidonians and Egyptians. Now Joel is warning of an ominous future threat, as he describes the Babylonian army that would wage scorched earth, not only killing the people, and the livestock, but destroying even the vegetation. "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." Joel 2:3. Joel 2 parallels Revelation 9 where a plague of locusts is described followed by an army from the East of 200 million.

God's Army

After describing the terrifying destruction that will come from these invaders from the East, Joel reveals: "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 2:11. These foreign invaders who would destroy Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple itself, were commanded by God Himself! The promises to Israel were always conditional and are forfeited by those who abandon God. There is no future for those who have no use for God.

The Day of the Lord

Joel mentions the Day of the Lord 5 times and other prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zephaniah and Malachi also mention the Day of the Lord 19 times. The Day of the Lord is also mentioned in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 1:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and 2 Peter 3:10). Man has his day. The devil has his day. But the time is coming when God will have His Day. The Day of the Lord is coming when God will have His final say and He will bring the whole world under His rule. God will judge everyone. But He will first deal with His people. The Lord will bring punishment on His backslidden people who have violated His Covenant. When the disciples asked Jesus when will the Kingdom be restored He told them to go and preach the Gospel to all nations.

When Will You Respond?

We have a choice: Do you want God's discipline now, or God's Judgement later? The question is not will you bow, but when? You can bow to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord now, or you will be compelled to bow before Him as the Eternal Judge later. Is Jesus your Saviour? Or is He your Judge?

A Call to Repentance

"Now, therefore says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' 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." Joel 2:12-13

Biblical Repentance

The Bible emphasises 3 aspects of Repentance:

Conviction: a change of mind,

Contrition: a change of heart, and

Conversion: a change of life.

Change

It is not enough to confess our sins; we also need to reject sin mentally, to loathe it, and to forsake it. Repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of habits, and a change of behaviour.

The Message

This was the message of the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38. This was the message of the early Church: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19 "God commands all men everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30

Rend Your Heart

Joel calls for true repentance. "Rend your heart, and not your garments..." It is not what we do with our clothes. When it comes to repentance, it is our heart and mind that matters. We are in a dynamic relationship with God. God tells us how to pray: we must plead for mercy with fasting, with weeping and with mourning, seeking God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. And the heart of the Gospel is change. Changed hearts, changed minds and change lives.

Recovery and Restoration

The prophet Joel reveals that the Day of the Lord will bring destruction on the unready and unrepentant, but it will pour out blessings on the repentant people of God. Revival follows repentance and leads to restoration.

The Years the Locusts have Eaten

The Lord promises to restore the year that the locusts have eaten. All of us mourn lost opportunities, wasted time, ruined relationships and wasted years. "If only!" We so often regret our poor decisions and squandered opportunities. Here the Lord promises restoration of the years that the locusts have eaten. In His supernatural way, God is able to do a lot with a little. He who could feed thousands with just 5 loaves and 2 fish, is able to not only add to our lives, but multiply His blessings upon it. Joel promises a total restoration. Not only a physical restoration of the crops that the locusts ate but also a Spiritual restoration.

The Valley of Decision

Chapter 3 has a vision of the Kidron Valley on the Eastern side of Jerusalem, which was called the Valley of Decision. God issues a challenge to the nations to prepare for war, to assemble and to see how far they can dare to advance in a war against Almighty God. For the Day of the Lord is coming when He will

intervene and judge the nations. God will have the final Word. It is His decision that will decide our eternal destiny. Where will you spend Eternity? It is futile to attempt to fight against God. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Eternal Judge is more than a Conqueror. The Lord will roar, his voice will shake the earth. The Lord will be a shelter for His people and the strength of His children. "So you shall know that I am the Lord your God." Joel 3:17

Ask Seek Knock

The question is not: Do you accept Jesus, but does Jesus accept you? The question is not: Will you open your door to Jesus, but will He open His door to you? He is God. You are not. It is not all about you. It is all about God. You need to ask, seek and knock on His door and seek entrance to His Kingdom.

Jesus in Joel

Jesus will pour out His Holy Spirit on His people "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. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days." Joel 2:28-29. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

The Promise of Pentecost

It is this very passage, (Joel 2:28-32), that the Apostle Peter quotes from in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.'" Acts 2:16-21. The Apostle Peter proclaimed: "Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved." Three thousand people called on the Name of the Lord on Pentecost and were added to the Church that day.

The Fountain of Living Waters

"And it will come to pass in that day that the mountain 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...from generation to generation." Joel 3:18-20

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Living Waters that flows into the wilderness and brings life where there is death, bringing forgiveness of sins and freedom from bondage for His people, from generation to generation and forever. A river will not rise higher than its source. Jesus is the Living Water. He is our Temple. He will bless the nations.

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