

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 1: Introduction to the Book of Joel and The Day of the Lord

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOEL AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

I. THE PROPHETS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

- A. The books between Isaiah to Malachi are referred to as “the exilic prophets.” They lived and ministered before, during and after two different periods of Israel’s history in which foreign armies invaded and sent the Jews into exile. The first was executed by the Assyrians in the 720’s BC and the second by the Babylonians between 606 and 586 BC.
1. Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and others led Israel in and through the Assyrian invasion led by a king named Sennacherib.
 2. Jeremiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Habakkuk and others led Israel in and through the Babylonian invasion(s) led by a king named Nebuchadnezzar.
 3. Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi led Israel in and through the return from exile as the Jews returned to their land.
 4. Some prophets - like Jeremiah and Daniel - were pre-teenagers when the invasions and deportations began. As a result Daniel was able to witness not only the expulsion of his people from the land but also their restoration and return.
- B. These men were given a difficult task. They were called to announce the coming devastation of the land of Israel, the expulsion of its inhabitants and the destruction of Jerusalem explaining it as the judgment of God. They were called to be prophets of “the Day of the Lord.”
- C. The Day of the Lord has a prominent place in Biblical history and eschatology: Isaiah 2:10-22; 4:1-6; 11:1-15; 13:6- 9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 12, 14-18, 20; Zechariah 14:1-4; Malachi 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 6:17.
- D. The Day of the Lord is both **a historical event** that we look back upon to *learn from* and **a future event** that we look forward to *prepare for*.
- E. The Day of the Lord is the hour of redemptive history - either history past or history future - where God decisively deals with His friends and His enemies. The Day of the Lord is both “great” and “terrible” (Joel 2:11b). It is an hour of deliverance, mercy, vindication and restoration. And it is an hour of turmoil, judgment, violence and pain. The Day of the Lord is the Lord’s Day when He executes justice in its many forms.
- F. The Day of the Lord is theologically centered around the city of Jerusalem. Due to the covenantal significance of Jerusalem it has always been and will continue to be the “eye of the storm.”
-

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 1: Introduction to the Book of Joel and The Day of the Lord

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. Though the dating of the book of Joel has been widely debated the most reasonable option is that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah before the invasion of Babylon in 606/605BC. He wrote *after* the agricultural and economic crisis of a locust invasion and *before* the a military invasion; a military invasion that threatened the city of Jerusalem. While we can't determine the dates of historical locust plagues, we can determine the possible dates of military invasions. And because Joel was writing to leadership in Jerusalem its evident that he ministered before the Assyrians or the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem.
- B. I favor the view that Joel prophesied in the decades that preceded Babylonian invasion and deportation.
- C. Beginning in 606/605BC King Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian army in a series of invasions spanning two decades. The invasions came in three waves culminating in 586BC when the city of Jerusalem was decimated.
- D. Joel stands distinct from the rest of the prophets and unique for a number of reasons:
1. Joel explains many of the controversial theological issues related to God's judgment that are unique to his prophecy alone. He explains why judgment is released and how God expresses Himself in judgment.
 2. Joel explains how the people were to respond to God's judgment. The prophet not only relays the information of the reality of judgment but how what we're expected to do in the midst of it. No other book in Scripture gives us this much information about how to understand and respond to crisis and judgment. Joel is explicit. He describes in vivid detail the process of response to crisis.
 3. Joel explains with striking clarity how history foreshadows eschatology. He uses the Day of the Lord in his generation to describe the Day of the Lord in the final generation. Nearly all the prophets utilize this "near/far" method of communication, but Joel does it more succinctly than the others. For example, Isaiah prophesies of events that have a near and far fulfillment numerous times within 66 chapters whereas Joel does it in 3. In many ways, Joel simplifies the messages contained in the Major prophets.
- E. Joel's prophecy is focused entirely on the Day of the Lord; most of which pertains to the final generation. Joel is a book for us to understand. It is as relevant to us - if not more - than Joel's generation.
- F. We see three "days of the Lord" in the book of Joel. First, in Joel 1, we see the agricultural crisis (Joel 1:15). Second, in Joel 2, we see the Babylonian military invasion of Israel (Joel 2:1, 11). Third, in Joel 3, we see the long awaited restoration, regeneration and salvation of Israel and God's judgment on the Antichrist's empire as well as the nations that come against Israel (Joel 2:31; 3:14).

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 1: Introduction to the Book of Joel and The Day of the Lord

- G. We are possibly decades away from a global crisis that will far eclipse that which Joel's generation witnessed. If so, we are at the beginning of the greatest crisis the earth has ever known. And the book of Joel is indispensable to us as we approach this great storm on the horizon.

III. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DAY OF THE LORD: THE CLIMAX OF THE TIME OF UNEQUALED TRIBULATION

- A. One of the primary reasons we should invest our time and energy into understanding the message of the book of Joel is its prophetic relevance to the generation in which we're living. Based on the premise that we're living in the generation of the Lord's return, Joel spoke more about our generation than he did his own. He gave more details about the Day of the Lord in our generation than he did about the Day of the Lord in his generation.
- B. The eschatological Day of the Lord that Joel spoke of is the climax of what Jeremiah called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:5-7), of what Daniel called "a time of trouble such as never has been" (Daniel 12:1), of what Jesus called "a time of tribulation, such as has not been" (Matthew 24:21) and of what one of the elders around the throne in heaven called "the great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14). The Day of the Lord terminates the time of tribulation and serves as the transitional timeframe between this age and the next.
- C. The Lord spared no 'ink' describing this tumultuous hour of history.
- D. Jesus's description of the "great tribulation:"

15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (Matthew 24:15-22)

- E. Jeremiah's description of the "great tribulation:"

3 For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it." 4 These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah: 5 "Thus says the Lord: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. 6 Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? 7 Alas! That day is so great

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 1: Introduction to the Book of Joel and The Day of the Lord

there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:3-7)

F. Daniel's description of the "great tribulation:"

1 "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:1-3)

G. The elder's description of the "great tribulation:"

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." 13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-14)

H. The Day of the Lord is:

1. Eschatological - Terminates in the return of Jesus & the resurrection of the dead
2. Israel-centric - Revolves around the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel
3. Global - Impacts every nation
4. Unprecedented - Unequaled in magnitude
5. Horrific - Threatens the survival of 'human beings'

IV. THE NEED TO BE IMMERSSED IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

The Day of the Lord will be the greatest crisis & the greatest revival in history (Joel 2:28-32). It's essential we immerse ourselves in the book of Joel to understand what "the Spirit is saying to the church" as we approach this sublime hour. It will require more than casual study or just listening to messages but a diligent lifestyle of "eating the scroll." God is calling us to take this seriously.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 1: Introduction to the Book of Joel and The Day of the Lord

He said to me, “Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. He said to me “fill your stomach with this scroll.” So I ate it, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness. (Ezek. 3:1-3)

I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book [similar to Ezekiel’s scroll].” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it [meditated on it to understand it], and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. When I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, “You must prophesy ... about many ... nations ... and kings.” (Rev. 10:9-11)

- A. God is bringing forth those who understand His heart of love in the midst of judgment like Ezekiel and John did; they will eat the scroll (or meditate on the message) in its sweetness and its bitterness.
- B. The sweetness of this message is what God sovereignly accomplishes in His love and mercy. It is also bitter because of the *real* human pain involved.
- C. The Lord is raising up men and women like Joel, digesting the message thoroughly, including both the sweet and the bitter dimensions. The greatest revival and crisis in history is coming. The Church will be prepared with forerunners who have stood in the counsel of the Lord, those who have “eaten the scroll” of His Word and thus have strong understanding of what the Scripture says about the generation in which the Lord returns.
- D. The point of immersing our lives in the message of the book of Joel is to produce confidence in our hearts in God’s love and wisdom and to dislodge all accusations against God. Moreover, it is to partner with the Spirit in proclaiming the truth of God’s heart to others, thus replacing Satan’s lies for truth, causing offense towards God to be replaced with love and trust.
- E. The role of the forerunner is to establish hearts in confident love before a God of love who has no contradiction in His personality as He releases the end-time judgments. God is now raising up forerunners—people from all over the earth who will give themselves now to digesting His scroll, the prophetic Scriptures.
- F. In doing this we become a voice in the coming hour of crisis. Then with understanding, we help others to make sense of what is happening by speaking truth.
- G. In that day, forerunners will be voices preparing the Lord’s people for His return and the unique dynamics related to it. One way that forerunners prepare the way of the Lord’s return is by dislodging the accusations against God in the hearts of others.