Joel

1 Joel son of Pethuel received this message from the Lord:

2 Leaders, listen to this message!
   Listen to me, all you people
   that live in the land.
   Has anything like this happened before
   during your lifetime? No!
   Did anything like this happen
   during your fathers’ lifetime? No!
3 You will tell these things to your children.
   Your children will tell their children.
   And your grandchildren will tell
   the people of the next generation.
4 What the cutting locust* has left,
   the swarming locust has eaten.
   And what the swarming locust has left,
   the hopping locust has eaten.
   And what the hopping locust has left,
   the destroying locust* has eaten!

The Locusts Arrive

5 Drunks, wake up and cry!
   All of you people that drink wine, cry.
   Why? Because your sweet wine is
   finished.
   You won’t get another taste of that wine.
6 A large and powerful nation came
   to attack my country.
   Its soldiers were too many to count.
   Its weapons were as sharp as a lion’s teeth
   and as powerful as a lion’s jaw.
7 It destroyed my grapevine.
   Its good vines withered and died.
   It destroyed my fig tree,
   stripped off the bark and threw it away.

The People Cry

8 Cry like the young woman
   that was ready to be married,
   and her husband-to-be was killed.
9 Priests, servants of the Lord, cry!
   Why? Because there will be no more
   grain and drink offerings
   in the Lord’s temple.*
10 The fields are ruined.
    Even the ground is crying.
    Why? Because the grain is destroyed;
    the new wine is dried up,
    and the olive oil is gone.
11 Be sad, farmers!
    Cry loud, grape farmers!
    Why? Because the harvest in the field
    is lost.
12 The vines have become dry.
    And the fig tree is dying.
    All the trees in the field—the pomegranate,
    the palm, and the apple—have withered.
    And happiness among the people is dead.
13 Priests, put on your clothes of sadness
    and cry loudly.
    Servants of the altar,* cry loudly.
    Servants of my God, you will sleep
    in your clothes of sadness.
    Why? Because there will be no more
    grain and drink offerings
    in God’s temple.*

locust Insects, like grasshoppers. Locusts can quickly destroy all
   trees and plants in a farmer’s fields. So locusts made the people
   very scared. Here, Joel might be talking about an enemy’s army.
   cutting … destroying locusts These are the different names for
   the locusts. These may be different names for the same kind of
   locusts—only at different times of the locust’s growth period.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.
   A kind of grain.
barley A kind of grain.
altar(s) A stone table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.
The Terrible Destruction of the Locusts

14 Tell the people that there will be a special time for not eating food. Call the people together for a special meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people that live in the land together. Bring them to the temple* of the Lord your God, and pray to the Lord.

15 Be sad! Why? Because the Lord’s special day is near. At that time, punishment will come like an attack from God All-Powerful. Our food is gone. Joy and happiness are gone from the temple* of our God. We planted seeds, but the seeds became dry and dead lying in the soil. Our plants are dry and dead. Our barns are empty and falling down.

16 The animals are hungry and groaning. The herds of cattle wander around, confused. They have no grass to eat. The sheep are dying.* 19 Lord, I am calling to you for help. Fire has changed our green fields into a desert. Flames have burned all the trees in the field. Wild animals also need your help. The streams are dry—there is no water! Fire has changed our green fields into a desert.

The Coming Day of the Lord

2 Blow the trumpet on Zion.* Shout a warning on my holy mountain. Let all the people that live in the land shake with fear. The Lord’s special day is coming. The Lord’s special day is near.

2 It will be a dark, gloomy day. It will be a dark and cloudy day. At sunrise, you will see the army spread over the mountains. It will be a great and powerful army. There has never been anything like it before. And there will never be anything like it again.

3 The army will destroy the land like a burning fire. In front of them, the land will be like the Garden of Eden. Behind them, the land will be like an empty desert. Nothing will escape them.

4 The locusts look like horses. They run like war horses.

5 Listen to them. It is like the noise of chariots* riding over the mountains. It is like the noise of flames burning the chaff.* They are a powerful people. They are ready for war.

6 Before this army, people shake with fear. Their faces become pale from fear.

7 The soldiers run fast. The soldiers climb over the walls. Each soldier marches straight ahead. They don’t move from their path.

8 They don’t trip each other. Each soldier walks in his own path. If one of the soldiers is hit and falls down, the others keep right on marching.

9 They run to the city. They quickly climb over the wall. They climb into the houses. They climb through the windows like thieves.

10 Before them, earth and sky shake. The sun and the moon become dark. And the stars stop shining.

11 The Lord calls loudly to his army. His camp is very large. That army obeys his commands. That army is very powerful. The Lord’s special day is a great and terrible day. No person can stop it.

The Lord Tells the People to Change

12 This is the Lord’s message: “Now come back to me with all your heart, you did bad things. cry, cry and don’t eat any food!...
13 Tear your hearts, not your clothes.)*
Come back to the Lord your God.
He is kind and merciful.
He does not become angry quickly.
He has great love.
Maybe he will change his mind
about the bad punishment he planned.
14 Who knows, maybe the Lord
will change his mind.
And maybe he will leave behind
a blessing for you.
Then you can give grain and drink offerings
to the Lord your God.

Pray to the Lord
15 Blow the trumpet at Zion.)*
Call for a special meeting.
Call for a special time for not eating.
16 Bring together the people.
Call for a special meeting.
Bring together the older men.
Bring together the children.
Bring the small babies
that still suck their mother’s breasts.
Let the bride and her new husband
come from their bedroom.
17 Let the priests, the Lord’s servants,
cry between the porch* and the altar.*
All of those people should say these things:
“Lord, have mercy on your people.
Don’t let your people be put to shame.
Don’t let other people tell jokes
about your people.
Don’t let people in other nations
laugh at us and say,
‘Where is their God?’”

The Lord Will Restore the Land
18 Then the Lord became excited about
his land.
He felt sorry for his people.

19 The Lord spoke to his people.
He said,
“I will send you grain, wine, and oil.
You will have plenty.
I won’t shame you among the nations
any more.
20 No, I will force those people from the
north* to leave your land.
I will make them go into a dry,
empty land.
Some of them will go to the eastern sea.
Some of them will go to the western sea.
Those people did such terrible things.
But they will be like a dead
and rotting thing.
There will be such a terrible smell!”

The Land Will Be Made New Again
21 Land, don’t be afraid.
Be happy and full of joy.
The Lord will do great things.
22 Animals of the field, don’t be afraid.
The desert pastures will grow grass.
The trees will grow fruit.
The fig trees and the vines will grow
plenty of fruit.
23 So be happy, people of Zion.*
Be joyful in the Lord your God.
He will be good and give you rain.
He will send you the early rains
and the late rains like before.
24 The threshing floors* will be filled
with wheat.
And the barrels will overflow
with wine and olive oil.
25 “I, the Lord, sent my army against you.
The swarming locusts
and the hopping locusts
and the destroying locusts
and the cutting locusts*
ate everything you had.
But I, the Lord, will pay you back
for those years of trouble.”

Tear your hearts, not your clothes  People tore their clothes to show their sadness. Here God wants the people to be truly sad for the bad things they did.
Zion  The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.
porch  An open area in front of the temple.
altar(s)  A stone table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.
north  The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.
threshing floor(s)  A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.
swarming locusts … cutting locusts  See Joel 1:4.
Then you will have plenty to eat. You will be full. You will praise the name of the Lord your God. He has done wonderful things for you. My people will never again be ashamed.

You will know that I am with Israel. You will know that I am the Lord your God. There is no other God. My people will never be ashamed again.”

God Will Give His Spirit to All People

“After this I will pour my Spirit on all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. At that time I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, both men and women. I will show amazing things in the sky and on the earth—There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke. The sun will be changed into darkness, the moon will be changed into blood. And then the great and wonderful Day of the Lord will come! And then, any person that calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There will be survivors on Mount Zion* and in Jerusalem, just like the Lord said. Yes, the survivors that the Lord is calling will come back. Judah’s Enemies Will Be Punished

“Yes, at that time, I will bring back the people of Judah and Jerusalem from captivity. I will also gather all the nations together. I will bring all these nations down into Jehoshaphat Valley.* There I will judge all the surrounding nations. The sun will be changed into darkness, the moon will be changed into blood. And then the great and wonderful Day of the Lord will come! And then, any person that calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

There will be survivors on Mount Zion* and in Jerusalem, just like the Lord said. Yes, the survivors that the Lord is calling will come back.

Prepare for War

Announce this among the nations: Prepare for war! Wake up the strong men! Let all the men of war come near. Let them come up! Beat your plows into swords. Make spears from your pruning hooks.* Let the weak man say, “I am a strong soldier.” All of you nations, hurry! Come together in that place! Lord, bring your strong soldiers! Wake up, nations! Come to Jehoshaphat Valley! There I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

prophesy To receive special messages from God, and then teach those things to people.
vision(s) Something like a dream that God used to speak to people.
Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.
Jehoshaphat Valley This name means, “The Lord judged.”

lots Sticks, stones, or pieces of bone used like dice for making decisions. See Proverbs 16:33.
prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops following him.
You are not important to me Literally, “What are you to me?”
temples Buildings used for worship. Here, the temples were used to worship idols.
pruning hooks These tools were used to prune (cut) branches of trees. Read Isa. 2:4.
13 Bring the sickle,* because the harvest is ripe.* Come, walk on the grapes,* because the winepress is full. The barrels will be full and spilling over, because their evil is great.

14 There are many, many people in the Valley of Decision.* The Lord’s special day is near in the Valley of Decision.

15 The sun and the moon will become dark. The stars will stop shining.

16 The Lord God will shout from Zion,* He will shout from Jerusalem, and the sky and the earth will shake. But the Lord God will be a safe place for his people. He will be a place of safety for the people of Israel.

17 “Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, I live on Zion,* my holy mountain. Jerusalem will become holy. Strangers will never pass through that city again.”

18 “On that day, the mountains will drip with sweet wine. The hills will flow with milk. And water will flow through all the empty rivers of Judah. A fountain will come from the Lord’s temple.* It will give water to Acacia Valley.

19 Egypt will be empty. Edom will be an empty wilderness. Why? Because they were cruel to the people of Judah. They killed innocent people* in their country.

20 But there will always be people living in Judah, People will live in Jerusalem through many generations.

21 Those people killed my people. So I really will punish them!” The Lord God will live in Zion!*
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