

Joel Background

Author: Joel son of Pethuel. Joel means “Yahweh is God”. There are about 13 different people in the Bible named Joel. The name Pethuel only occurs in Joel 1:1. We have no other background about the prophet Joel.

Date:

1. Evidence favors a post-exilic date after the 2nd temple was built in 516 BC (no mention of northern tribes or kings but there is a temple). Raymond Bryan Dillard (Westminster Theological Seminary) takes this view.
2. The Assyrian invasion of 701 BC, the Babylonian invasion of 598 BC, or the Babylonian invasion of 588 BC. Douglas Stuart (Gordon Conwell) in the “Word Biblical Commentary: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah” takes this view.
3. “9th century, time of Joash: K. A. Credner, G. C. Aalders, E. J. Young, M. Bič [my note: 836-796 BC]
4. late 7th century: A. S. Kapelrud, C. A. Keller, K. Koch
5. early 6th century: W. Rudolph [my note: like 598 or 588 BC]
6. late 6th to mid-5th century: W. F. Albright, J. M. Myers, B. Reicke, G. Ahlström, L. Allen [my note: between the time of Zerubbabel and the time of Ezra / Nehemiah]
7. late 5th to mid-4th century: A. Weiser, H. W. Wolff, J. A. Bewer, F. R. Stephenson
8. early 3d century: M. Treves
9. as late as 2d century: B. Duhm”

3-9 above are quoted, with my notes inserted, from Raymond Dillard’s commentary on Joel in “Minor Prophets: an Exegetical and Expository Commentary” edited by McComiskey.

Occasion:

1. An invasion of locusts. This seems to be the majority view. Raymond Dillard takes this view.
2. An invasion by either Assyrians or Babylonians. Joel uses locusts as prophetic imagery to represent the invading countries. Douglas Stuart takes this view. This seems to be a newer interpretation. Jeremiah 4 uses the language of a lion who is to attack Judah. However in the context of the book of Jeremiah, it is clear that the lion represents Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. Opponents of this view point out that we should only take it as imagery if what the images represent are made clear in other parts of the book.

Location: While a definite location is not given, Joel’s references to the priests (3 times), ministers (4), offering (6), the house of God (5), Jerusalem (6) and Zion (6) leads some to believe that Joel prophesied in Jerusalem.

Overview: Sin brings God’s punishment on his people, Israel. God is sovereign in the devastation brought by an army of locusts. But God is faithful to those he has called and he saves them and ultimately prospers them. The enemies of God are judged and vanquished on the day of the Lord.

New Testament Quotes:

1. Joel is probably best known from Acts 2:17-21 when Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32a on the day of Pentecost when the disciples received the Holy Spirit. “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” Acts 2:17.
2. Joel 2:32 “All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved” is quoted in Acts 2 (see above) and also in Romans 10:13.