

Joel 1:13-2:11 – Call to Fasting and Prayer

God brought judgment on his people through a locust swarm. It was a cause for lament, mourning and sackcloth.

Read Joel 1:13-20.

In verse 8 there was a general call to lament. In verse 13 the priests were called to lament and put on sackcloth. If there was no grain or drink offerings for the temple, how would that have affected the priests? (1:13)

In verse 14, what were the priests exhorted to do? It was Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple that God would answer prayers made at the temple when there were locust and other afflictions. 1 Kings 8:37-40. This was also God's promise to Solomon if Israel humbled themselves and prayed to God at the temple. 2 Chronicles 7:11-16. What groups of people were to be involved in prayer and fasting? (1:14)

What is "the day of the Lord"? This phrase appears 5 times in Joel. That is more occurrences than any other book of the Bible. We saw this phrase in Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes". Sometimes prophecy includes near events and events far in the future mashed together as if they occurred at the same time. (1:15)

What else was cut off from the temple besides the offerings? (1:16) What was the status of the harvest? (1:17)

What was affected by God's judgment besides the people? (1:18, 20)

Based on verses 17-20, what judgment did God bring on the people, the land and the animals? Were these judgments in addition to the locust plague? (1:17-20)

Read Joel 2:1-11.

Verse 1 says that “the day of the Lord is coming; it is near”. What were they to do to warn people that God’s judgment was coming? (2:1)

How was God’s judgment described in verses 2 and 3?

The idea that the locusts are used as imagery of a human army breaks apart for me in the following verses. Why are they “like a powerful army” (verse 5) if in fact they are a human invading army like the Babylonians? Why are they “like warriors” and “like soldiers” (verse 7) if they are actually warriors and soldiers of the Babylonian army? That imagery doesn’t make sense to me. I am not like a human being. I am a human being. To me, the imagery is turned on its head in these verses if what is in view is the Assyrian or the Babylonian army. Another view of Joel is that chapter one talks about literal locusts. Joel 2:1-11 talks about locusts as imagery of either God’s heavenly army (angels?) or of judgments in general. Another view is that both chapter 1 and 2 are talking about literal locusts. These literal locust are a warning of God’s judgments to come and especially the judgment of the last day, the Final Judgment. Which view fits best?

How was the locust swarm described? How would a locust swarm be like horses, like a flame, like a powerful army, like warriors and soldiers, like a thief? (2:4-9)

How would an invading human army darken the sun, moon and stars? How would a locust swarm darken the sun, moon and stars? (2:10)

Who was the true commander of this invading army of judgment? I often hear people comment about a tragedy that God had nothing to do with it. We know that God is not the author of evil but God is sovereign in the midst of tragedy. From a human perspective, it was tragic that Jesus, being totally innocent, was sentenced to death. However this was God’s plan from before the foundation of the world. Jesus’ death brought salvation and eternal life for countless people. What Biblical perspective should we have when human tragedies occur? (2:11)

Verse 11 says of the day of the Lord, “who can endure it?” It may remind us of another passage in Malachi. Malachi 3:2 says, “But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?”