

Joel
A Message in a Plague of Locusts
Lesson 10

Key Verse

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9

Key Verse Thought: Read today's Key Verse. Do you know what it means to **confess** (means "to admit; to confess your guilt exposing yourself for punishment")? God will forgive when we confess our sin.

Emphasis: We are to recognize the destruction sin does, not only to a nation, but also to each life. We are to place our hope in Christ, obeying and pleasing Him, not the things of this world.

Lesson Summary: We need to remember what we have learned about Judah so far: after King Jehoshaphat, the nation of Judah had a time of bad kings. King Jehoram (King Jehoshaphat's son) married wicked King Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. He too, was a wicked king. Jehoram's son, Ahaziah, was yet another wicked king. He had only reigned one year when Jehu killed him (when he was visiting the king of Israel, Jehoram). When King Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, heard her son was dead, she made herself queen – killing all of the seed royal (except for one that was hidden – Jehoash). During this time of wicked kings, we learned that the house of God had become in great disrepair. When Jehoiada the priest revealed Jehoash as king of Judah, wicked Queen Athaliah was killed and the house of God was repaired. This is most likely the time that the book of Joel took place.

The book of Joel begins with, "**The word of the LORD that came to Joel**" Joel prophesied to Judah during the reign of Jehoash (Joash) that began in Second Kings chapter twelve. As we study, we will find that God directs His Words to the priests and the elders (remember that Jehoash was only seven years old when he became king, and Jehoiada the priest

counseled him). God spoke, and Joel relayed God’s message to the people. After seeing a plague of locusts, Joel warned of a coming invasion that he compared to that plague of locusts. Just as a plague of locusts completely destroys everything in its path, so the enemies of God would do to His people unless they repented of their sins against God. Joel called for the people to repent.

Joel continued his cry with an alarm warning of the “day of the Lord.” God’s people would be taken captive, but when they repented, God would restore the years that the locust had eaten. God’s judgment would fall upon the enemy nations and hope would once again be restored, and Judah will dwell forever.

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

- Monday: Joel 1
- Tuesday: Joel 2
- Wednesday: Joel 3
- Thursday: Joel 1
- Friday: Joel 2
- Saturday: Joel 3

Joel

A Message in a Plague of Locusts

1. A Plague of Locusts
 - Warning of destructive plague (Joel 1:1-7)
 - A cry for repentance (Joel 1:8-20)
2. The Day of the Lord
 - Sound an alarm warning of that day (Joel 2:1-11)
 - Call all to repent (Joel 2:12-17)
 - Restoration promised (Joel 2:18-32)
3. God’s Judgment
 - Proclaimed upon the nations (Joel 3:1-15)
 - The future of Judah (Joel 3:16-21)

Note: Remember what we have learned. After King Jehoshaphat, the nation of Judah had a time of bad kings. We learned that King Jehoram (King Jehoshaphat's son) married wicked King Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, and he was a wicked king. His son, King Ahaziah, was also a wicked king. He only reigned one year when Jehu killed him. When Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, heard he was dead, she made herself queen – killing all of the royal seed (except one that was hidden – Jehoash). During this time of wicked kings, we learned that the house of God had become in great disrepair. Wicked Queen Athaliah was killed, the priest, Jehoiada, instructed the young King Jehoash, and the house of God was repaired.

In this lesson, we will learn of the prophet, Joel, who spoke God's Word to Judah most likely during the time of King Jehoash. Compare the time of those wicked kings, knowing the disrepair in which we learned the temple was, with how Joel described the state of the nation Judah.

1. A Plague of Locusts (Joel 1)

Joel was a prophet of God. The name **Joel** means, "Jehovah is God." It almost seemed that the nation of Judah had forgotten God. Joel spoke God's Words to the people in Judah. While reading Joel, we see a great emphasis upon the priests, not a king. So it can be assumed that the time frame was during young King Jehoash's reign, while he was being counseled by the priest, Jehoiada (remember that Jehoash became king when he was only 7 years old). Another factor to consider: the enemies of the nation Judah that are mentioned in Joel were the same enemies that Judah faced during this timeframe of its history.

As we open the book of Joel, notice the cry for attention to what is happening. "2. **Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 3. Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation**" (Joel 1:2-3). God sent a man to warn the people to wake up and pay attention to what was happening.

Read of the desperate state in which we find the nation Judah by the following descriptions:

7. **He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white ... 9. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn. 10. The field is**

wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. (Joel 1: 7, 9-10)

Compare these verses to what God had done for His people according to Psalm 80:8: “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.” We can learn from these verses that the nation of Israel (Judah here) was called a vine – one that God took from slavery in Egypt and had planted in the Promised Land. Nevertheless, remember what we have learned about the state of the nation in the past couple of weeks. Judah had good and bad kings. Most recently, we found the kings of Judah to be so wicked that they had been compared to the wicked kings of Israel. (Remember the allegiance established with wicked King Ahab – especially the marriage of Ahab’s daughter, Athaliah, to Judah’s King Jehoram.) Understand the condition in which they had allowed themselves to become when they turned from God.

When they allowed sin to rule in the land, God allowed this waste (compared to a vine laid waste) to take place in the land. Joel compared it to what a plague of locusts would do to a land. “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten” (Joel 1:4). By this verse, we recognize a description of the different stages of a locust. According to this verse, everything would be totally eaten or destroyed. That was the place to which sin was taking the nation Judah – to complete and utter destruction. Nevertheless, just as we learned with the events in the nation of Israel, God would not discipline His people without first warning them through his prophet. That is just what we can read about in the book of Joel. Joel is warning of impending destruction by an enemy nation if they do not turn back to God.

Joel calls God’s people to repentance after this warning of that destructive plague of locusts (a picture of the destruction by an enemy nation).

13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. 14. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, 15. Alas for the day! for the day of

the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.” (Joel 1:13-15)

Notice where the repentance was to begin: with the leaders (the priests) at the house of the Lord. The priests were to lead the people back to God through repentance. However, with that calling was a warning of “the day of the LORD” that would come with destruction. They had already seen bad times, but worse times would come if they did not return to God.

A Deeper Path: Christians today are to recognize the destruction sin can do to a life. Remember what James 1:15 teaches: “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” **Lust** means, “to satisfy the carnal appetites.” Christians are to choose to do what is right (what pleases God) over what we want to do. When we choose our own pleasures over God’s plan, it is sin and it brings death. Also see the following verse: “As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death” (Proverbs 11:19).

2. The Day of the Lord (Joel 2)

After a call to repentance, Joel continued telling about “the day of the LORD.” What would the “the day of the LORD” be like? Read Joel 2:1-11, especially noticing the description in the following:

- “2. A day of darkness and of gloominess,
- a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains:
- a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even* to the years of many generations.
- A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth:
- the land *is* as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness;
- yea, and nothing shall escape them.
- The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.
- Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap,
- like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.
- Before their face the people shall be much pained:

- all faces shall gather blackness.
- They shall run like mighty men;
- they shall climb the wall like men of war;
- and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:
- Neither shall one thrust another;
- they shall walk every one in his path:
- and *when* they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.
- They shall run to and fro in the city;
- they shall run upon the wall,
- they shall climb up upon the houses;
- they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.
- The earth shall quake before them;
- the heavens shall tremble:
- the sun and the moon shall be dark,
- and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

11. And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:1-11).

Yet even with that terrible description, see what Joel recorded next. "12. Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14. Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him ..."

(Joel 2:12-14a). Joel's message? Repent, for God is merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

See what Joel then recorded for us to know and understand. "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people" (Joel 2:18). If God were to see true repentance from His people, He would be jealous for them not wanting any evil to befall them – He would pity them.

For that, there is a hope that he will not only spare them, but also bless His people. It is with that hope of restoration that Joel chapter two ends. "25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great

army which I sent among you. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:25-26).

However, with that promise of restoration was a reminder that to be delivered, they must call upon the name of the Lord. Take note of the following verse. “And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call” (Joel 2:32).

A Deeper Path: Did that sound familiar? Do you remember what we already learned about in the book of Jonah? After the call to repentance by Jonah to the people of Nineveh, the king of Nineveh understood that God expected repentance. In addition, he also had a hope that God would turn from his fierce anger and spare their lives. “8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands. 9 .Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” (Jonah 3:8-9). We can remember that God did just that. He turned from his fierce anger against sin when he saw true repentance throughout the city of Nineveh.

Remember what else we read in this lesson: “And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call” (Joel 2:32). Compare that verse to the following verse. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). God never changes. Today, God still saves people who will call upon Him.

3. God’s Judgment (Joel 3)

Joel continued with his message. After the destruction and captivity, God would restore His people to their land. “For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem” (Joel 3:1). The message continued with what God would do to those enemy nations that had been instruments of destruction and discipline on God’s people. “2. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among

the nations, and parted my land. ... 7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head” (Joel 3:2, 7). Not only would God repay in the Old Testament days, but it also alludes to a future “day of the Lord” that is still yet to come.

Read to understand as Joel tells about what God will do for Judah after the judgment upon all of the nations, the nations that were enemies of God.

16. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17. So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more ... 20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. (Joel 3:16-17, 20)

Hope would once again be restored, and Judah shall dwell forever.

Joel 1-3 at a Glance:

Chapter 1: Compares a destroying enemy to an army of locusts; even the different stages rendering complete destruction; a cry for repentance for the destruction already fallen and that which is yet to come

Chapter 2: Sound an alarm warning the people of the Day of the Lord then a description of that day; a call to repent; God would return and restore if they would truly repent; a description of what God would one day do for His people

Chapter 3: God’s judgment proclaimed on all the nations; but Judah would dwell forever

Reinforcement: Never forget why we study the books of History and the Prophets. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). As we remember the history of Israel and Judah, we are to remember that God always dealt with his people. He warned of discipline for disobedience and promised restoration of His people when they repented. God is the same today. “5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children,

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:5-6). Remember, God loved us so much, He sent His only begotten Son to die upon the cross to pay for our sins. We are to show our love to Him by obeying His commands – remember Jesus’ words. “**If ye love me, keep my commandments**” (John 14:15).

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today’s lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will please God with our lives, and not allow sin to rule them. Pray that we will remember to repent when we have done wrong, and remember to show our love to God by obeying His commands.*