

Old Testament Survey

Joel

The Meaning of Joel

Joel means “Yahweh is God.” The theme of Joel is a solemn warning to Israel regarding the judgment which will be visited upon them in the day of the Lord. A contemporary locust plague serves as a picture of this coming judgment.

General Outline of Joel

- I. Plague of Locusts as a Type of the Day of the Lord - Joel 1:1-2:11
 - A. The tremendous devastation by the locust - Joel 1:1-7
 - B. This plague is a picture of the coming invasions of Chaldea and Assyria - Joel 1:8-20
 - C. The Day of the Lord as a Day of Reckoning - Joel 2:1-11
- II. Call to Repentance - Joel 2:12-19
 - A. External forms of contrition as well as heart repentance - Joel 2:12-15
 - B. Repentance on a nationwide scale - Joel 2:16-17
 - C. The promise of the returning mercy of the Lord - Joel 2:18-19
- III. Promise of Showers of Blessing - Joel 2:20-32
 - A. Terrible overthrow of Israel's invaders from the north - Joel 2:20
 1. Sennacherib
 2. The world powers of the last days
 - B. Rain from the Lord after locust plague and drought - Joel 2:21-27
 - C. This rain a prefiguration of outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days (beginning at Pentecost), 2:28-32; meteoric signs the final phase of the last days (Matthew 24:29)
- IV. Final Triumph of God in the Day of the Lord - Joel 3:1-21
 - A. Final slaughter of unbelievers; divine judgment upon the final dictator - Joel 3:1-16
 1. Foreshadowing of judgment on Phoenicia and Philistia - Joel 3:1-13
 2. Foreshadowing triumphs of the Maccabean age - Joel 3:14-16
 - B. Millennial triumph and peace for Jerusalem - Joel 3:17-21

Time of Composition

Various schools of criticism have dated this book from the ninth century B.C. all the way to the fourth century. The evidence, however, suggests a date somewhere around 830 B.C. as seen below:

1. The type of government suggested by the prophecies suggest a regency. No king is mentioned and it appears as though the elders are ruling the nation. This would suggest the time of Joash who began to rule when he was seven.
2. Joel and Amos appear to borrow from one another, and the evidence suggests it was Amos who borrowed from Joel not vice versa. This would mean Joel was written prior to 755 B.C.
3. The enemies threatening Judah are seen as the Phoenicians, Philistines, Egyptians, and Edomites, not Chaldeans and Assyrians. This would point to a date in the ninth century B.C.

Recent critical scholarship places the book around the time of Josiah, 609 B.C. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. The appearance of Greeks in Joel 3:6 point to a later time than the ninth century B.C.

However, the mention of Greeks in Joel 3:6 is used to shown that the Phoenicians were selling slaves that far away, not as a reference to the coming Greek empire.

2. Joel does not mention the Northern Kingdom.

So what. Neither do Zephaniah or Nahum who date, by the critic's own admission, to the seventh century B.C.