

Introduction to Joel

Author

The prophet Joel cannot be identified with any of the 12 other figures in the OT who have the same name. He is not mentioned outside the books of Joel and Acts ([Ac 2:16](#)). The non-Biblical legends about him are unconvincing. His father, Pethuel ([1:1](#)), is also unknown. Judging from his concern with Judah and Jerusalem (see [2:32](#); [3:1](#), [6](#), [8](#), [16-20](#)), it seems likely that Joel lived in that area.

Date

The book contains no references to datable historical events, but a good case can be made for its being written in the ninth century B.C. Many interpreters, however, date the book as late as the postexilic period (sixth century), after Haggai and Zechariah. In either case, its message is not significantly affected by its dating.

The book of Joel has striking linguistic parallels to those of Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The literary relationships of these books are determined by one's view of the date of Joel. If it was written early, the other prophets borrowed his phrases; if it was later, the reverse may have taken place. Some scholars maintain that all the prophets drew more or less from the religious literary traditions that they and their readers shared in common--liturgical and otherwise.

Message

Joel sees the massive locust plague and severe drought devastating Judah as a harbinger of the "great and dreadful day of the LORD" ([2:31](#)). (The locusts he mentions in [1:4](#); [2:25](#) are best understood as real, not as allegorical representations of the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans, as held by some interpreters.) Confronted with this crisis, he calls on everyone to repent: old and young ([1:2-3](#)), drunkards ([1:5](#)), farmers ([1:11](#)) and priests ([1:13](#)). He describes the locusts as the Lord's army and sees in their coming a reminder that the day of the Lord is near. He does not voice the popular notion that the day will be one of judgment on the nations but deliverance and blessing for Israel. Instead--with Isaiah ([2:10-21](#)), Jeremiah ([4:6](#)), Amos ([5:18-20](#)) and Zephaniah ([1:7-18](#))--he describes the day as one of punishment for unfaithful Israel as well. Restoration and blessing will come only after judgment and repentance.

Outline

- I. Title ([1:1](#))
- II. Judah Experiences a Foretaste of the Day of the Lord ([1:2-2:17](#))
 - A. A Call to Mourning and Prayer ([1:2-14](#))
 - B. The Announcement of the Day of the Lord ([1:15-2:11](#))
 - C. A Call to Repentance and Prayer ([2:12-17](#))
- III. Judah Is Assured of Salvation in the Day of the Lord ([2:18-3:21](#))
 - A. The Lord's Restoration of Judah ([2:18-27](#))
 - B. The Lord's Renewal of His People ([2:28-32](#))
 - C. The Coming of the Day of the Lord (ch. [3](#))
 - 1. The nations judged ([3:1-16](#))
 - 2. God's people blessed ([3:17-21](#))