

Lesson #21

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read the book of Joel**BACKGROUND****Author:** Joel**Date and Place of Ministry:** preached some 25 years in Jerusalem to the nation of Judah c. 814 – 789 BC
a contemporary of Elisha**Theme:** *Day of the Lord* 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14**Purposes:** to explain Judah's condition in the present
to reveal God's judgments and blessings in the future**Scripture background:** 2 Chronicles 24:17-19**OUTLINE**

- I. Present Conditions 1 (recovering from a locust plague)
- II. Divine Answers 2-3 (about judgment, repentance and blessings)

HISTORICAL SETTING

While God is speaking to Israel in the north, thru the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, there is also a need to speak to Judah in the south. Joash was made king at 7 years old. His uncle who was high priest raised him and ruled the nation. Everyone was following God. When Joash took over as leader, he followed God while his uncle, the high priest lived. When his uncle died, the king and people turned from God to practice idolatry. 2 Chronicles 24:17-19.

To get the people's attention, God sent a locust plague (Joel 1) and a drought (1:19-20). Everyone and everything was suffering. The people became discouraged, asking *Why are we having so much trouble?*

God answers thru the prophet Joel who lives in Jerusalem. He explains their present conditions. God has done this to get their attention. Joel describes the locust as tho they were an army (Joel 2). Then he tells them it is a picture of what will come in their generation and in the *Day of the Lord* - either more locust or an actual army which will destroy them. In fact it may be both (cf. Rev. 9:1-11). This is what they will experience if they do not repent. But there is a way out.

If they repent - not just outwardly, but also inwardly by changing their thinking, (Joel 2:12) there will be blessing. God will forgive because He is fair and merciful. In the present God will remove the locust or army, restore their crops and send rain. In the future He will send the Holy Spirit, who will give them the desire and power to obey God (2:28-29). If the future generation repents, the *Day of the Lord* (*Day of Yahweh*) will bring judgment upon their enemies and perfect peace for Judah (Joel 3). Chronologically, this is one of the first descriptions of God's future Kingdom here on earth and events leading up to it.

Joel writes about repentance, judgments, (*Day of the Lord*) and blessing in 2 ways:

- In **his generation** these events will happen in a **limited** way.

He tells the people: *As God's people, if you keep rejecting God, He will bring even worse judgment, but if you turn back to Him, He is ready to bless.*

- In the **future** these events will happen in **full**.

Before God sets up His kingdom, He will send world-wide judgment called the *Day of the Lord*. God will use it to bring an end to evil and injustice. The result will be that those who have refused Jesus will experience God's judgment and be separated from Him. Those who have accepted Jesus' payment will have peace, living in His presence.

DEFINITIONS

Prophet - one who speaks for another. **Seer** - one who *sees* things from God's perspective and who has spiritual insight.

Man/woman of God - one who is totally devoted to God.

Heart - In Scripture it always means mind, will and emotions; *all that a person is*; the emphasis is on the mind and will.

God relents from sending calamity (*repents from evil* is a bad translation)

God changes His action towards people when people change their attitude towards Him.

Slow to anger is literally *long-tempered*; God does not fly off the handle or lash out at people when they turn back to Him.

Day of the Lord/Day of Yahweh

It is the time of Satan's kingdom, commonly known as the *Tribulation*.

It is not a 24-hour day, but a 7-year period of God's future judgment on Satan and his world.

In a limited way, the *Day of the Lord* can be any time in history when God takes severe action against sin.



EXPLANATIONS

About Prophets: they represented God to the people, while **priests** represented the people to God.

- * **Old Testament prophets** had a ministry only to God's people (only Jonah had a 6-week exception).
5% of their message predicted the future; 95% was about the present.
They taught about God, explained His laws and how to apply them to life; they rebuked disobedience.
A special group spoke and wrote *new* revelation which *became* Scripture.
- * **Today's prophets/prophecy** can only speak or confirm what God has already said.
There is no new revelation that can be added to Scripture.

About Joel – his date of ministry Because no king is mentioned, there is a question if he lived in the 800's or 400's.
Joel says that when he is writing, the Jewish enemies are the Philistines, Tyre and Sidon. This was true in the 800's BC. By the 400's they were either destroyed or conquered and the Persians had become the enemy. This means Joel's date has to be in the 800's.

About locust

Locust are green grasshoppers. When there are heavy rains, all the previously laid eggs hatch. This creates overcrowding. So within 2 hours, the metabolic rate of these newly born begin to change, turning them from green to red, yellow and black. Within a few weeks they grow longer wings, broader shoulders and a larger head. They band together like an army and travel in groups. They are now the dreaded locust.

They cannot fly until their bodies are warmed by the sun and reach 70° F. With a double set of wings they can fly 10 miles an hour for 12 hours. In 8 months, they can travel 2000 miles. A locust swarm can be up to 400 square miles and contain 40 billion locust. It can block out the light of the sun, moon and stars. It can be heard from 6 miles away. Every day it can travel 100 miles and eat 80,000 tons of vegetation. This means one locust swarm eats in one day what a million people eat in one year. A bad plague can last 4 days bringing swarm upon swarm.

The life span of locust is 4-12 months. In the last week of life the female lays her eggs in 3 different places of moist sandy soil. There are 70 eggs in each location. Since all the females lay their eggs in the same area, there can be 5000 eggs to the square foot. If the moisture is right, the next season all those eggs will hatch and a new plague begins.

About the future

Day of the Lord – also called *Satan's Kingdom* or the *Tribulation* 2:1-11
Judgment of nations 3:1-16 cf. Matt. 23:31-46; Rev. 14:15-20
God's peace in His kingdom 3:17-21 cf. Rev. 20:1-7

APPLICATION: *I will restore to you the years the locust have eaten* 2:25

- ◆ Some people do not learn about God until later in life and then realize how many years they have wasted.
- ◆ Some of God's people...
 - ... have made bad choices that ate away and devoured their potential.
They never found healing from abuse, injustice or tragedy.
 - ... have lived a spiritual life full of duty rather than joy and enjoyment.
- ◆ How often we as God's people have thought, *if only I could change the past*.
God says to us, *You cannot change the past. But if You choose to obey Me now,*
I will double your opportunities and experience in the present; I will double your joy for the years of sorrow.
- ◆ God can take the negative and curses of the past and change them into blessings.
No matter our age, out of heartache can come a new beginning and new opportunities to:
 - have spiritual ministry
 - reach our potential
 - enjoy companionship with God
 - experience His life in us and thru us

I will restore to YOU the years the locust have eaten.

