



Summary of Joel

Introduction

Joel calls all the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem to lament and return to the Lord during a time of national calamity. This crisis is precipitated in the first instance by a locust plague that has destroyed both wine and grain, and therefore threatens the ability of the people of God to present offerings in the temple. Given this background, Joel may have served as a lament in the ongoing life of God's people during other times of national tragedy.

Chapter One

The first unit (vv.1-12) describes the devastation that has come upon Judah, providing the reason for the call to lament in the second unit (vv.13-20).

A plague of locusts comes upon Judah: what the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

All has withered, and Judah must lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. There can be no grain or drink offering now. Repent with wailing, sackcloth and a fast. The brooks have dried up, and the animals suffer in the drought.

Chapter Two

Joel describes the coming of an army, whose arrival may yet be averted by wholehearted return to the Lord. Verses 1-11 describe the coming of this great army, and vv.12-17 describe the command to return to the Lord.

The Lord answers the prayer of v.17. He restores the reputation of his people (vv.18-20), the land (vv.21-27), and his presence through pouring out his Spirit on all people (vv.28-32). Much of vv.18-32 is spoken by the Lord himself in the first person.

Chapter Three

The Lord provides reasons for judgement (vv.1-8), a description of judgement on the day of the Lord that will be their climax (vv.9-16), and the certainty of the Lord dwelling with his people (vv.17-21).