

Joel 1

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[0 : 00] The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethor.! Hear this, you elders! Give ear, all inhabitants of the land. Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers?

Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation. What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten.

What the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine. Because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come against my land, powerful and beyond number. Its teeth are lion's teeth, and as the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine, and splintered my fig tree.

It has stripped off their bark, and thrown it down. Their branches are made white. Lament, like a virgin wearing sackcloth. For the bridegroom of her youth, the grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the Lord.

[1 : 04] The priests mourn. The ministers of the Lord. The fields are destroyed. The ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed. The wine dries up. The oil languishes.

Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil. Wail, O vine dressers. For the wheat and the barley. Because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up. The fig tree languishes.

Pomegranate, palm and apple. All the trees of the field have dried up. And gladness dries up from the children of man. Put on sackcloth and the mento priests. Wail, O ministers of the altar.

Go in. Pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God. Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate the fast. Call a solemn assembly.

Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of your land. For the house of the Lord your God. And cry out to the Lord. Alas for the day. For the day of the Lord is near. And as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

[2 : 02] It's not food cut off from before our eyes. Joy and gladness from the house of our God. The seed shrivels under the clods. The storehouses are desolate.

The granaries are torn down. Because the grain has dried up. How the beasts groan. The herds of cattle are perplexed. Because there's no pasture for them. Even the flocks of sheep suffer. To you, O Lord, I call. The fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And flames burn all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pamphlet you. Because the water brooks have dried up.

And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. Blow a trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm on my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.

For the day of the Lord is coming. It is near. A day of darkness and gloom. A day of clouds and thick darkness. Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains. A great and powerful people.

[2 : 58] Their light has never been seen before. Nor will there ever be again. Now, even though through the years of all generations. Fire devours them. And behind them are flame burns.

The land is like the garden of Eden before them. But behind them are desolate wilderness. And nothing escapes them. Their appearance is the appearance of horses. And like war horses they run.

As with the rumbling of chariots. They leap on the tops of the mountains. Like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble. Like a powerful army drawn up the battle. Before them peoples are in anguish.

All faces grow pale. Like warriors they charge. Like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way. They do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another.

Each marches in his path. They burst through the weapons and are arm upholtered. They leap upon the city. They run upon the walls. They climb up into the houses. They enter through the windows like a thief.

[3 : 54] The earth quakes before them. The heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened. The stars withdraw their shining. The Lord utters his voice before his army. For his camp is exceedingly great.

He who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great. And very awesome. And who can endure it? Yet even now.

Declares the Lord. Return to me with all your heart. With fast and weeping and with mourning. Rent your hearts off your garments. Return to the Lord your God. For he is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger. An abounding and steadfast love. And he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent. And leave a blessing behind him. A grain offering and a drink offering. For the Lord your God.

Bow the trumpet and sign. Consecrate a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation. Assemble the elders. Gather the children. And even nursing infants.

[4 : 50] Let the bridegroom leave his chamber. And the bride her room. Between the vestibule and the altar. Let the priests and ministers of the Lord weep. And say spare your people O Lord.

And make not your heritage a reproach. And by word among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples. Where is their God? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. These words were written thousands of years ago. And we cannot understand them. Let alone obey them. Without the work of your Holy Spirit.

And so we pray. Open our eyes. And bless us in the midst of this day. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

Actions have consequences. Don't they?

Actions have consequences. If you've got as many speeding points on your license as I have. Then you are a little bit more cautious. With speed cameras. At least for a while anyway.

[5 : 47] And that is the problem isn't it? We tend to be slow. Learned. Maybe we're even a little bit stubborn. And we quickly forget our mistakes. And how disastrous they were. And we plough on in self confidence.

And that is probably true. Most. When it comes to following the Lord Jesus. And we need to be reminded. Again and again. Of the consequences. Of our rebellion against God.

Of our sin. The consequences of rejecting God. And going our own way in life. And that means we need to be reminded. Again and again. That God has said. He will discipline us.

For the way that we disobey him. Now the message of the prophet Joel. Is very simple. The message of the prophet Joel. Is this. We must learn. From God's past judgment.

Because it reminds us. That there will be a future judgment. And therefore we must change today. There was a past judgment. There will be a future judgment.

[6 : 45] And therefore we must change today. So let's hear the word of the Lord to us. So the first thing I want to say to you. Is wake up. Wake up. Look at verse 2. It's on your sheet.

Verse 2. Hear this you elders. Give you. All inhabitants of the land. Has such a thing happened in your days. Or in the days of your fathers. Tell your children of it.

And let your children tell their children. And their children another generation. Everyone in God's people should know about this. They should know about this from their parents need. This is not some great national success to relay.

It is a disaster. It's a warning Joel says. Tell the generation. Set it verse 4. Tell them what the cutting locust has left. The swarming locust has eaten.

What the swarming locust left. The hopping locust has eaten. And what the hopping locust left. The destroying locust has eaten. Wave upon wave upon wave of locusts. What has happened is it has stripped bare.

[7 : 45] Every layer of vegetation. Until there's nothing. And not a shred of crops remains. One translator puts it like this. The middle left by the crunching locust.

The gnawing locust has eaten. And the middle left by the gnawing locust. The grinding locust has eaten. And the middle left by the grinding locust. The chomping locust has eaten. Now I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of locusts.

A swarm of locusts. They're not like grasshoppers. A little grasshopper makes a noise in the grass. And you can't see it. A locust is in contrast about 10 centimetres long. And a swarm of locusts.

In an area of about a square foot. You can have a thousand locusts. That is an unstoppable mass of eating machines.

That has hit the people of God. Ask the drunks. Verse 5. They're crying into their beer. Because it's the last pint that they're going to have for a very long time at the White Hart. There's no barley for beer.

[8 : 43] There's no vines for wine. But in verse 6. For a nation has come up against my land. Powerful and beyond number. And its teeth are lion's teeth. And it's got the fangs of a lioness.

It's more like an invading army. Than an insect infestation. Even the trees have been destroyed. Look at verse 8. And the bride.

Ask the bride how bad it is. Her wedding is off. Because no one's in a party mood. Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth. For the bridegroom of her youth. The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of God.

There's no grain offering. Don't bother going to the temple. Because there's nothing to offer the Lord. Ask the farmer. Verses 10 to 12. For it is left. Be ashamed of the tillers of the soil.

Wheat or vine dressers. For the wheat and the barley. Because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up. There's nothing left in the supermarket. The shelves are bare.

[9 : 44] And everybody knows that the weight of man's heart is through his stomach. And so at the end of verse 12. And gladness dries up from the children of man. It's a picture of total, total devastation.

But it's not the ministry of agriculture. That the Lord holds responsible. It's not a question of poor farming technique. It's not a question of global warming.

Because God's people, the people of Judah, knew full well. But they weren't just unlucky. They weren't just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The locusts were not the result of an unfortunate change in wind direction.

No, God had told them the locusts would come. So if you go back to Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28.42 says. The cricket shall possess all your trees. And the fruit of your ground.

Why would God promise such a thing? He says this. All these curses shall come upon you. And pursue you. And overtake you. Till you are destroyed. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

[10 : 44] To keep his commandments. And his statutes that he commanded you. They shall be a sign and a wonder against you. And your offspring forever. You see the reason why the locusts have destroyed every single living piece of vegetation in the land.

Was because of a problem in their relationship with the Lord. That is what they must acknowledge. That they disobeyed God. They must wake up to what is going on.

God says wake up and weep. Look at verse 13 with me. Put on sackcloth and lament. O priest. Wail O ministers of the altar. Go in. Pass the night in sackcloth.

O ministers of my God. The priests are to lead the procession of sorrow. But in verse 14. All the people. Are to be there. They are to join them at the temple.

And they are to cry. To the only one that can help. To the Lord whom they have disobeyed. And they need urgent action to address the fact. That they have been as the people of God.

[11 : 46] Apathetic. In their relationship with him. And the reason that God's judgment is so serious. Is because actually it's not his final word on disobedience. Look at verse 15.

Alas. For the day. For the day of the Lord is near. And as destruction from the almighty. It comes. The locusts.

Well yeah. They were devastating. It was a disaster. But remember. Says Joel. They just show us. That there will be another day. There will be a day of the Lord. Which will be another day of destruction.

The day when he finally brings his judgment on all people. And the locusts. Well actually. What are they like? They are like a smack across the wrist. Compared to the destruction on that final day. And it's no wonder that Joel leads by example. Look at verse 19. He says. To you. O Lord I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

[12 : 45] And flame has burned all the trees of the fields. He says. Alas. O Lord. The sovereign covenant name for God. He says.

God does not change. You are still God. And God does not change today. He is still the same sovereign Lord. And he still disciplines his people.

I want to say. We are not under the same blessings and curses. Here God's people Judah. They are under the old covenant. The great news. For those of us who follow the Lord Jesus.

As the Bible tells us. The Lord Jesus has taken once and for all. God's curse for us on the cross. And therefore. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have every spiritual blessing in Christ. But God. Still uses the circumstances of our lives. To teach us. Doesn't he? So listen to this from Hebrews 12. 10.

[13:41] For. He disciplined us. For a short time. As it. For our parents. Disciplined us. For a short time. As seemed best to them. But God disciplines us. For our good.

That we might share his holiness. For the moment. All discipline seems painful. Rather than pleasant. But later it yields. The peaceful fruit of righteousness. To those who have been trained by it. There is a purpose.

In God's loving discipline. He ensures. That. He enforces. The boundaries. That he has set. And the purpose of discipline.

Is that. That we notice. We've made a real mess. Of following the Lord Jesus. And therefore. We learn from the discipline. And we change. To follow him more closely. That we would be more holy. More righteous.

And God. Only disciplines. His children. He brings judgment. On his people. Out of his great love for them. So see the purpose.

[14:36] Of these locusts. In Joel chapter 1. It is not a fit of temper. By God. It is not God. Getting it off his chest. It is a warning. And so in verses 2 to 14.

God. God is saying to them. Look back. On what is going on. And turn to me. Because if you notice. In verse 15. There is a too late.

There is a day of the Lord. When judgment will finally come. And the problem. Is like the people of Judah. In the time of Joel. We are slow to learn. The lessons of disobedience. Because we do not read history.

Through the lens. Of the sovereignty of God. We don't really acknowledge. That God is in control. Of all the circumstances. Of our lives. That doesn't mean.

We blame him. For the consequences. Of bad things. That we do. And our bad decisions. That is not the way God works. But it does mean. That God will at times. Give us over. To the mess. That we make in our lives.

[15:37] Put simply. Sin. Has consequences. And we are to be distressed. About them. Not to go into denial. Like we often do.

Sin has consequences. Person. So sexual immorality. When sex. Is ripped. Out of the context. Of a man and woman. In marriage.

It leaves. All sorts of scars. Emotionally. In abortion. I read this morning. That last year. There were. 219,336 abortions.

Half of all pregnancies. In girls under 18. It's more than any other country. In Europe. Sex. Outside. Of. The relationship. Of a man and wife.

In marriage. Has consequences. And we should weep. All of us. I should weep. Over the consequences. Of my personal sin. If you tell lies. You will not be trusted.

[16:35] And your relationships. Will break down. If you are greedy. You find that you end up. Living for something. That never satisfies you. If you make money. Your end. You will wake up one day. To find out.

That it has destroyed your life. But the problems of Judah. That the people. Joel was writing to. Were not. Individual. They were not just individual. They were corporate. It was the whole country. The whole of God's people. And isn't that the same. For God's people today. Look at our church. Do you think. That it's a coincidence. In the UK. That there are so many.

Church buildings. That are empty. Do you think. It's a coincidence. That there are so many. Churches. That are skint. Do you think. That it's bad luck. That Christians. Just can't keep out of the news.

For all sorts of. Wrong reasons. What has it been this week? South Wales. Is a sex scandal. And local evangelical church. I don't know what it is. In England.

[17:28] God's hand of judgment. Rests. On so much. That calls itself. The church. In our country. And we should weep. Shouldn't we. Because it makes our job.

Telling people about the Lord Jesus. So much harder. My brother's a minister in Swansea. And when his son. Who's 16. When his friends. Earlier this year. Found out that his dad. Was a minister. Immediately. They said. Well he must be a paedophile. And he had it. For about a week in school. And that's because of all the things. They shared about the church. And the past. And there are times out there. When we as a church. Have to corporately. Repent. But within God's sovereignty.

That is the right. Attitude. To have. I was thinking. This morning. What would happen. If a load of people. Left the church where I work. And I could sit. Well the easy thing.

[18:23] Would be able to say. They're wrong. Good. They've gone. The right thing to say. Actually. God's in control. And therefore. Where. In my ministry.

And in the elders. Leadership. Am I failing. To be obedient to him. And we need to call. Anyone who confesses. To follow Jesus. Back to. Whole hearted.

Full out. Obedience. To Jesus demands. And if we don't. Encourage each other. In that way. We are as much. To blame. For Jesus reputation. On our land. As the people.

Drag it down. With their sin. But before we think. The situation. Of the Lucas. In the past. Has been bad. God says to us. You've not seen anything yet. So here's our second heading.

The first one is. Wake up. The second one is. Tremble. Look at chapter 2. In verse 1. Can you see it? Lower trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm. On my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants.

[19:19] Of the Lamb tremble. For the day. The Lord is near. It's a call to war. But however strong the defense is. It's going to be a very one sided campaign. Can you see verse 2. A day of darkness and gloom.

A day of clouds and thick darkness. Can you imagine an army so huge. That they darken the whole of the night. That is the day when God will bring his judgment.

And that judgment starts. You see where it starts in verse 1. In Zion. On my holy hill. Right in the middle of God's people. And this isn't just judgment on the nations.

This is judgment that starts in the people of God. And Peter says. Doesn't he. It is time for judgment to begin with the family of God. And there's never been an army like this.

It's like an impenetrable storm. It sweeps across land. In verse 3. It's like a forest fire. In verses 4 and 5. It's like a mighty cavalry.

[20:13] With chariots that rumble effilately. Effilately. Effilately. You know what I mean. It makes any tank look weak and pathetic. Look at verse 6.

Don't you love it. The colour drains from the face of every human being. Who stands upon the earth. Verse 7. Like warriors they charge. Like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on its way.

And they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another. Each marches in his path. They burst through their weapons. And are not halted. No war can stop them. No defence can make them break their stride.

Such terrifying force. That even verse 10. Creation is fearful of them. And what is terrifying most of all. In verse 11. Is their commander. The Lord.

The Lord utters his voice before his army. For his camp is exceedingly great. For he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great. And very awesome. And who can endure it. Well who can endure it.

[21:14] There is only one answer. And that is no one can endure it. On the day when the living God returns. In the person of his son. The Lord Jesus Christ. To judge the world. No one will endure it.

Like a massed army. That brings darkness on the land. And smashes through solid stone walls. No one can endure it. And you think. Well this is all very Old Testament. Isn't it? Let me read to you what Jesus says.

The sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from heaven. And the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven. The sign of the son of man. And then all the tribes of the earth. Will mourn.

And they will see the son of man. Coming on the clouds of heaven. With power and great glory. You see the locust. The son of Joel will want their child. Compared to what will happen on that day. And the message to the people of Judah.

And the message to us. Is very very simple. If you will not learn. God says. From what I've done in the past. Then you will face the full force. Of my unstoppable judgment. In the future. And if you will not heed my discipline.

[22 : 13] Now you will face my righteous anger. In the future. It is said. The New Testament mentions Jesus return. Once every ten verses.

You cannot read the Bible. And ignore the return of the Lord. It's a day that will motivate us to action. Because it's a day. Where we will be. Whether you're following the Lord Jesus Christ or not. You will stand before him. And so how do you cope? How do you respond. To a God who can reduce every human being. To a fearful wreck. Well the great news is this is it.

The God who gives this morning. It's not a distant hard hearted God. No this is the threat of a tender God. Who offers his relationship to his people. So firstly we get.

Secondly tremble. And thirdly turn. Look at verse 12. Yet even now. Declares the Lord. Return to me with all your heart.

[23 : 14] With fasting. With weeping. And with mourning. No matter how you feel. That you've rejected God. No matter how many times you've heard the message of the gospel. However often you've been somewhere.

And you've heard about Jesus. No matter what you've done. In the last couple of weeks. Whatever that may be. There is an even now with God. He never shuts the door on those who will return.

Even now. But this Lord is not going to be conned. Do you see that? Look at verse 13. He says rend your heart. Not your garments. Your relationship with God is a heart matter.

And God will not be fooled. By a sudden burst of religious activity. Or you giving money to the church. You can rip your shirt off. And wail in sorrow. But the Lord is interested in what goes on in there.

Return to the Lord. For he is gracious and merciful. Slough to anger. Abounding in steadfast love. And he relents over disaster. Notice how he's described to the people of God. He's saying to you this afternoon.

[24 : 16] The Lord your God. The gracious God who made you promises. The merciful God who rescued you from being slaves in Egypt. The generous God who put you in a new land.

No the problem does not lie with God. Does it? Because he is gracious and compassionate. Slow to anger. Abounding in love. And he relents from sending calamity. It's Luke 15 all over again isn't it? And the father. The father in the parable of the prodigal son. Standing. Watching. Waiting. Wanting. People who return from their sin. Remember what I'm like God says to you.

But don't presume on God. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent. And leave a blessing behind him. So many people presume on God. Don't they? They think they can take God for a ride. I've got a church occasionally accept this Jesus stuff. But it doesn't really matter what I do. We're not as crass as that. But we do plan sins in our heart.

[25 : 15] Searching of future forgiveness. Well says Joe. Who knows? Never presume on the holy God. Who takes sins so seriously. That only the lifeless son could deal with it.

So turn. Turn. Whether you call yourself a Christian or not. Turn. And who is to repent in verse 16.

Look at verse 16. Gather the people. Consecrate the congregation. Assemble the elders.

Gather the children. Even nursing infants. Go to the creche. Get them out of the creche. And bring them before me. Get the couple out of the honeymoon suite. Get the mothers breastfeeding. And look at what the priests say when they lead them.

Verse 17. Spare your people O Lord. And make not your heritage or reproach. A byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples. Where is their God?

And they are to turn back to God. And we are to turn back to God. So his reputation is not tarnished. In other words. For the sake of God's glory. Because when people use God.

[26 : 18] Like a slot. And a forgiveness machine. It makes a mockery of God's name. Among those who don't follow him. But when God's people turn to him. Broken hearted. When they make him their great desire.

When they treasure Jesus. Above all else. And they repent. It is at that point. That it makes people wonder. What a great God you have.

That actually repentance. I assume we're thinking on this. But think about during this week. I think it is as people repent. That is the greatest witness.

To the watching world. Jesus says in his first sermon. Mark 115. The time is coming. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. Return to me. Don't bother ripping your shirt. Ratcheting up your church attendance. Come to me with your heart broken by sin. Come to me recognizing. How shabbily you've treated God. How disgracefully you've treated the people. Come. Repent and believe.

[27 : 19] And you will find the Lord is gracious. Compassionate. Slow to anger. Abounding in love. And the wonderful truth is this. He has not yet come.

Has he? As he promised here. With his armies of judgment. But first he has come in the person of his son. He has come born humbly. To live perfectly. And to die sacrificially in our place.

So that when we come back to God. What do we find? We find two arms. Outstretched on the cross. So come to Jesus. If you've never come to him. Come to him before it's too late.

If you doubt that there's going to be a too late. Look back at history. And be sure. That is nothing compared to what is promised in the future. I'm slow to anger.

Abounding in love and faithfulness. But you see this message. Of repent and believe. Is not just for people who don't follow the Lord Jesus. If that's you. We won't need to do that today.

[28 : 17] But it is a message for the people who are in God's people. In the church. You see sometimes we think repent and believe. Is something we did in the past. But Joel is written to the people of God.

To Judah. To the church. And this message. Of coming judgment. Is a message to all those who think. That as long as we say Jesus died for me. It doesn't matter really how we live.

It's a warning to those who come to church. But they've long stopped since coming to Christ. It's a warning to those who treat Jesus like a thirsting kiss. He's like a half a mile time of need.

Rather than the rightful king and ruler of their lives. And it's a warning to those who even shed tears. But continue to plan sin secretly. To repent and believe.

Is not only the way we start the Christian faith. Faith. It's the shape of the Christian faith. Friend your heart. And not your garments. Return to the Lord.

[29 : 16] For he is gracious. And he is compassionate. He is slow. To anger. I love that.

Somebody described my son as slow. I would be very very unhappy with him. Wouldn't you? But our God is slow. He is slow in one respect. He is slow to anger.

And he is abounding in love. And he relents from sending calamity. Who knows. That he may turn and have pity. And leave behind a blessing. There is dreadful judgment to come.

Please. Please. I beg you. Do not presume. On the living God. But be broken by your sin. Let's pray.