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What's the Point....of Joel?

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The date when Joel wrote is unknown, though most likely it was in roughly in the same era as Hosea. Joel's prophecies were given after a frightening locust swarm that had left the Israelites with little to eat. In this setting, Joel helps us also to see the emptiness that this world's "locusts" produce in our spirits, and he reassures us that God can renew us when we seek him in truth.

He Will Pour Out His Spirit (Overview Of Joel)

Joel vividly describes the locust swarm, which has left a bleak landscape with little to eat (Joel 1). Joel uses this event to remind us of our dependence on God; and the locust swarm is also an image of the way that the world's distractions and its ways can eat away at our spirits and leave us empty. Yet the book is also a promise of renewal, and in particular, it also looks ahead to Jesus' coming.

After the locust swarm, God can still make the wilderness become green (Joel 2). Thus the prophet calls us to rend our hearts, not our garments; that is, simply to let God into our hearts and let him cleanse us, rather than relying on making dramatic gestures. And he indeed will show us mercy instead of calamity, and he will show us compassion rather than anger.

As God promises renewal from the locust swarm, he also promises renewal to those who have lost their way or those who have drifted from God, or those who are simply confused or discouraged. When we walk in the light of Jesus, God can sweep away the world's "locusts" from our hearts, and our Heavenly Father can send abundant showers of grace and understanding.

Then we come to Joel's memorable vision of God pouring out his Spirit on everyone who seeks him, men and women, young and old, and doing wonders in the heavens and on the earth (see also Acts 2:16-33). The images of upheaval remind us that everything in this world is temporary, and they also promise us that God will make everything new in Jesus. He also promises that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord in truth will be saved (see also Romans 10:11-13).

Joel concludes with the image of the valley of decision (Joel 3). For some, this may mean God's call to decide whether we believe in Jesus and follow him; for others, it could mean simply the daily decisions we must make. We see again images of the sun and moon and stars being shaken, for the world's appearances are a mere mist; yet God promises to be our refuge, and he promises us that a fountain of living water that flows from him will renew and nourish us inwardly.

Overall Thoughts

When God promises deliverance and renewal to the people of Joel's time, he also promises to bless them abundantly when they turn to him. Likewise, in Jesus we are not only forgiven and cleansed, for our Heavenly Father also pours out his Spirit and his compassion on us. Moreover, he brings us a hope that this world cannot take away, and he gives the promise of eternal life to those who remain in his Son and walk humbly by faith in him and in his message.

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What's the Point....of Joel? **Caleb Dillinger**

The short, 3 chapter book of Joel is a haunting mixture of judgment, lament, hope, and triumph. God always reigns victorious. But his people? In the final days there will be restoration, but in the present, sin filled state, there is much sorrow. A primary reason to read Joel today is to be humbled and look to God's future work for hope.

The prophet begins with a warning made applicable to everyone - old, young, men, women, all people should listen. There is a call to repentance, for the Lord will punish with intensity those who have wandered astray.

This is followed by a proclamation concerning the day of the Lord. On that day, the Lord's army will dominate, and any who stand opposed will not be able to endure. Consequently, the reader/listener of this message should consider that call to repentance. A second call is made following this proclamation, again calling for a change of action and heart. Fast, pray, turn away from sin. This is the only way to avoid being swept away by the Lord's Army on the Lord's Day.

You could think this sounds judgmental and ominous, but that misses the heart of the Lord. Joel 2:18-19 put it like this: ¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ¹⁹ The Lord answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations." The Lord wants people saved - he wants a relationship with all people! This is the heart of the gospel and reason for Jesus. People could not repent enough or fast enough to fix the sin problem. Joel is laying that out before the people. We, as Christian readers, are blessed to read this in light of Jesus and his redeeming work. It is because the Lord had pity on humanity that Jesus is sent!

The prophet Joel then includes a prophetic insight into the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which Peter proclaims at Pentecost. Joel 2:28-29 says this: ²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit."

The prophet ends his message in chapter 3 with a repeat of the central message: there will be judgment and there will be salvation. Both come from the Lord. Will you look to Him? The choice is yours. That's the point of reading Joel today.