

05-08-16 – Joel 2:13

The Hand of God – Devastation to Restoration

Joel = The Lord is God

Citizen of Southern Kingdom – Judah and Jerusalem

In his prophecy, he is critical of Priests – so not one of them himself.

A Contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos.

David Jeremiah – *“In these days when we fear a coming global economic apocalypse, it’s important to be familiar with the message of Joel, a prophet who dealt with economic calamity and its aftermath. In Joel’s day, the monetary devastation was caused by locusts, which could destroy a nation’s economy overnight. When swarms of locusts descended on an area, they darkened the sky, sounded like a fleet of helicopters, and consumed every plant in their path. They appeared overnight and were gone the next day, obliterating a year’s income and leaving devastation behind.” (Understanding the 66 Books of the Bible, p. 129).*

DEVASTATION:

LOCUSTS: A sign of God’s judgment on sin – the sin of His people Israel and Judah. Joel’s message was to tell the people they were experiencing God’s judgment. The locusts also foreshadowed a future event – the Day of the Lord! This would be God’s judgment on all humankind. “The plague of locusts was a signpost for the future.” (D. Jeremiah, p. 129).

RESTORATION:

Second theme – Joel 2: 25 – “So I will restore to you the years that the warming locust has eaten...”

- Joel – best read as 2 parts:**
- 1) The locust invasion and the Day of the Lord.
 - 2) The Mercy of God in restoring Israel and judging her enemies.

For Us: God restores and makes all things new! What about your life?

Key Verse: 2:13 – *“Change your life, not just your clothes. Come back to God, your God. And here’s why: God is kind and merciful. He takes a deep breath, and puts up with a lot. This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to cancel catastrophe.” (The Message)*

Key Action: “Turn back to God from any and every sin, for He abundantly pardons and wonderfully restores.” (p. 131)

Key Thought: “The locust plague of Joel’s day was a divine judgment, foreshadowing the Day of the Lord which will bring destruction to the ungodly but blessings to God’s people.” (p. 130)

Joel was a prophet who dealt with economic calamity in Judah. The people were dependent on their crops for their own well-being as well as for the nation’s economic stability. The locusts! The locusts devastated their crops. They devoured everything in sight – GONE!

Ray Stedman reflected on such a time in his childhood when a grasshopper swarm came ... *"I can still remember how the sky was literally darkened by the great cloud of these insects. You could hear them descend into the standing grain of the fields like hail upon the ground and hear the continual rustling of the noise of their wings as you walked through the fields. Within moments of their descent, every blade of grass, every bit of vegetation was gone, and the fields looked as if they had never been planted. That is what happened in Israel. A locust horde descended upon the land and devoured every living thing. The crops were ruined and famine had come."* (Adventuring Through the Bible, p. 376).

JOEL – a little 3 chapter book that reveals the Hand of God. We heard last week how Hosea reveals the Heart of God; this book reveals the Hand of God. This is the Hand of God that controls our destiny and moves history according to His will.

Some people look at current events and put their head in the sand, while others look with future eyes – expecting the end and looking forward to it all the time. What do you think? Democracy is breaking down. Thy coming election may leave you no candidate you feel comfortable with. Are we in the last days? Is the next step the revealing of the Anti-Christ in our time? We don't know!

Economics is a serious force to be reckoned with. Karl Marx said it would be the controlling force of history. Even in the Revelation, we read, ***"so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name."*** (Rev. 13:17 - ESV)

However, *"the controlling principle behind human history is none other than God Himself. The hinge on which history turns is spiritual: God's Spirit is at work among people, and you cannot understand human events if you don't first recognize this fact."* (Adventuring Through the Bible, p. 374).

"The locusts appeared overnight and were gone the next day, obliterating a year's income and leaving devastation behind." (Understanding the 66 Books of the Bible, David Jeremiah, p. 129).

Locusts are a sign of judgment against sin...

Deut. 28:38 – ***"You shall bring out much seed to the field, but you shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it."*** (NASB)

Joel told the people the locusts were a sign of God's judgment, but they also told of a future event – The Day of the Lord!

The locusts were real and devastating to them, but they were also a sign of a coming judgment in the future. This coming judgment would be for all people and nations. Those who follow and trust in God will be spared, but those who disobey and fall away will be judged severely – The Judgment Seat of God!

BUT – there is another theme to Joel - - - RESTORATION!

Joel 2:25 – *"The Lord says, 'I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts. It was I who sent this great destroying army against you.'" (NLT)*

The book of Joel must be read and looked at in 2 parts. 1:1 - 2:17 – the locust invasion and the Day of the Lord. 2:18 – 3:21 – the mercy of God in restoring Israel and judging her enemies.

"Turn back to God from any and every sin, for He abundantly pardons and wonderfully restores" (p. 131)

He Makes All Things New!

Intro:

Some of the best sermon illustrations we can use are real life stories, our own lives or someone else's, but actual happenings. This is nothing new. Joel was a powerfully used O.T. prophet, and he had a sermon to preach that would change a nation – Israel. He also had a real-life illustration that set his message up well. Historically, national devastation by flood or drought or even a locust infestation were signs of God's judgment and were used by God through prophets to turn people back to God.

This is exactly the scenario in the book of Joel. God sent devastation upon Israel that wiped them out economically, as a judgment against their sin of abandoning God.

Eugene Peterson: *The event that Joel used as his text was a terrible locust plague that was devastating the crops of Israel, creating an agricultural disaster of major proportions. He compared it to a massive military invasion. But any catastrophe would have served him as well. He projected it onto the big screen and used it to focus the reality of God in the lives of his people. Then he expanded the focus to include everything and everyone everywhere – the whole world crowded into Decision Valley for God's verdict. This powerful picture has kept God's people alert to the eternal consequences of their decisions for many centuries.”* (The Message Study Bible, p. 1383)

This catastrophe didn't introduce anything new to Israel. *“It simply exposes the moral and spiritual reality that already exists but was hidden beneath and overlay of routine, self-preoccupation, and business as usual.”* (The Message Study Bible, p. 1383).

Then we are faced with a real decision. What do I do now that this has been exposed? Do I dig deeper and turn everything over to God who brought this about to get my attention, or do I continue to ignore the Hand of God in my life and push forward with a business as usual attitude?

It doesn't have to be something of national or epic proportions. It could be something small and simple that God uses to tap us on the shoulder, but it's still God. It has the same purpose. His goal may be to get the attention of an entire nation or one individual who has gone astray. He is concerned enough to care for you personally!

The M.E.N. Group is going through a book called, How God Makes Men. Listen to this quote from one of our past lessons... *“God makes men by doing whatever it takes to correct and restore us when we go astray.”* This is exactly what God was doing in Israel thousands of years ago, and exactly what He will continue to do in our lives as well. It is NOT to punish us, as if He gets some pleasure watching us suffer. It is purposed to get our attention so we will repent and restore our relationship with him. When we do -- Blessings are poured out upon our lives.

Restoration:

***After the cutting locusts finished eating the crops,
the swarming locusts took what was left!
After them came the hopping locusts,
and then the stripping locusts, too!*** (Joel 1:4 – NLT)

Devastation brought about by God for a purpose, but when they repent...

***The LORD says, “I will give you back what you lost
to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts,
the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts.
It was I who sent this great destroying army against you. (Joel 2:25 – NLT)***

In Israel – a sign of mourning was to tear their cloak and even throw ashes on their heads. An outward sign.

Peterson – *“Suffering, for example, can help us recover a lost humility, putting us in touch with the reality of our spiritual poverty. Suffering can also help us recover a lost spirituality, putting us in touch with God.”* (The Message Study Bible, p. 1388).