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# THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

**OLD TESTAMENT**

**BOOK 29**

**JOEL**



**The Prophet Joel by Michelangelo Buonarroti**

## SUMMARY

The prophet Joel showed up in Israel during a time of the most terrible plague of locusts in the nation's history. Joel came and prophesied to the land of Judah before the plague came. He warned the people of Judah that the devastation was going to sweep across the land very soon.

He called for a season of fasting, mourning, and repentance. He warned them of God's judgment in the imagery of the impending invasion of locusts. He called the people of Judah and Jerusalem to weep over the sins, and to fast and repent because the day of the Lord is approaching. Soon the plague came and devastated the whole land and its effects were clearly seen and felt.

The locusts came like a storm, they darkened the skies and every green thing was left barren. There was no hope of escape and they left utter decimation in their path. Joel seized upon the imagery of the locusts as a type of the greater judgement that would come on "the Day of the Lord" in the last days: Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? Joel also gave a message of hope and prophesied of great blessings that would follow and the glories of the Messiah's kingdom.

The name "Joel" means "Jehovah is God." Other than his name and the fact that he was the son of Pethuel, there is little known about this man Joel, other than the fact that he wrote a very powerful book.

Although it is not certain it seems that he prophesied around 800 BC during a time when Judah was experiencing prosperity and security. God was kind enough to give ample warning before such a devastating judgment.

When the plague of locusts came the land of Judah suffer dramatically, and what followed after was a time of famine drought. The plague was described by Joel in four stages, and Joel pointed to the greater judgment that was to swarm upon the nation if they did not turn from their ways and seek the Lord with their whole heart.

He called them to fast, and to repent, and to weep over their sins. Joel also gave a promise of hope and spoke of the great blessings that would follow in the kingdom of the Messiah.

**Chapter 1:** A plague of locusts upon Judah: what the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. Weep, drunkards, for the nation of locusts has laid waste the vine.

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 2:** The day of the Lord is coming – a day of darkness and gloominess, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains.

## SUMMARY Continued

A fiery, destroying nation comes – before them is like the Garden of Eden, behind them a desolate wilderness. The army are disciplined; the earth quakes before them. The Lord gives voice before His army.

Command to gather the people in repentance.

Rent hearts are better than rent garments. The Lord is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger. The Lord will be zealous for His land, and pity His people, removing the northern army to a barren and desolate land. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied.

The Lord will pour out His Spirit on all flesh – many shall prophesy and see visions. Blood and fire and pillars of smoke will be seen; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the Lord. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. In Jerusalem there shall be the deliverance of the remnant.

**Chapter 3:** All nations, who have scattered and cast lots for the Lord's people, will be gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and judged. (There is no such place, but 'Jehoshaphat' means 'the Lord judges'.) God warns the nations that He will retaliate against those (Tyre, Sidon, Philistia) who have mistreated His people, and looted His gold and silver.

The nations must prepare for war, beating their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears. The winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. The day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon will grow dark, the Lord shall roar, but protect his people.

I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Egypt and Edom shall be a desolation, but Judah will be fertile and rich, flowing with wine, milk and water. Judah shall abide forever, and those guilty of bloodshed will be acquitted; for the Lord dwells in Zion.

## NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:5** Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, Because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.
- 2:28** 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, Your young men shall see visions.
- 2:32** And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

## CHARACTER Definitions

**JOEL** - We know little of the prophet Joel beyond a few personal details contained in the book itself. He identified himself as the son of Pethuel, preached to the people of Judah, and expressed a great deal of interest in Jerusalem.

Joel also made several comments on the priests and the temple, indicating a familiarity with the center of worship in Judah.

Joel often drew upon natural imagery—the sun and the moon, the grass and the locusts—and in general seemed to understand the reality that truth must have an impact on us in the real world.

Dating the writing of the book of Joel remains one of the most difficult tasks for Old Testament scholars because unlike most prophetic writers, Joel gave no explicit indication of his time period. In particular, Joel refrained from mentioning the current ruling kings.

One of the most compelling arguments for dating the writing of the book of Joel explains this omission by suggesting the prophecy occurred in the aftermath of Judah's only ruling queen, Athaliah (d. 835 BC).

Upon her death, she left only her young son, Joash, to rule. But because Joash was too young to rule, the priest Jehoida ruled in his place until he came of age.

So if Joel prophesied during this caretaking period, it would make sense that he mentioned no official king. The book of Joel also makes ample mention of priests, temple rituals, and nations, such as Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom, that were prominent in the late ninth century BC.

All of this points to a date of approximately 835 BC or soon after, making Joel one of the earliest writing prophets, as well as a contemporary of the prophet Elisha.

The book focuses its prophetic judgment on the southern kingdom of Judah with frequent references to Zion and the temple worship. Joel's familiarity with this area and the worship in the temple suggests that he lived in Judah, possibly even in the city of Jerusalem itself.

The book of Joel's importance to the canon of Scripture stems from its being the first to develop an oft-mentioned biblical idea: the day of the Lord. While Obadiah mentioned the terrifying event first, Joel's book gives some of the most striking and specific details in all of Scripture about the day of the Lord.

Days cloaked in darkness, armies that conquer like consuming fire, and the moon turning to blood. Rooted in such vibrant and physical imagery, this time of ultimate judgment, still future for us today, makes clear the seriousness of God's judgment on sin.



MAP REFERENCES

