

The Prophets

Lesson #5

Joel

Notes

I. ***The Desolation Of Judah (1:1-2:17)***

- A. The scourge of locusts and drought (1:1-20).
 - 1. Description of the locust invasion (1:1-4).
 - 2. A call for the people to mourn and repent (1:5-14).
 - 3. "The day of the Lord" and a prayer for mercy (1:15-20).
- B. An urgent appeal for repentance (2:1-17).
 - 1. The trumpet of warning (2:1-3).
 - 2. A description of the calamity (2:4-11).
 - 3. Sincere repentance and fervent prayer are needed (2:12-17).

II. ***The Deliverance Of Judah (2:18-3:21)***

- A. The blessings promised (2:18-32).
 - 1. The removal of God's army (2:18-27).
 - 2. The outpouring of the Spirit and imminent judgment (2:28-32).
- B. Judgment on the nations (3:1-16).
 - 1. Injustices committed against the people will be corrected (3:1-3).
 - 2. Neighboring nations will be carried off in captivity (3:4-8).
 - 3. Destruction of heathen nations is by the power of God (3:9-16).
- C. Glorification of the people of God (3:17-21).

Outline

Joel 1:1-2:17

- The scourge of locusts and drought (1:1-20).
 - Description of the locust invasion (1:1-4).
 - The invasion in Joel's day was so destructive that he called upon the old men to call to remembrance any in the past similar to this one, and they could not.
 - The four different Hebrew words for locusts in vs. 4 probably are used to indicate the intensity of the plague and a successive series of locusts that had devastated the land.
- A call for the people to mourn and repent (1:5-14).
 - Joel names the luxuries and then proceeds to the essentials of life. All are affected. The drunkards and drinkers of wine are called on to awaken out of their stupor, for the source of their drink is cut off.
 - Passing from the plight of the wine-drinkers, the prophet calls upon the priests to mourn and lament because the offerings of worship are cut off. The description of the invasion of the locusts

and the devastation of the land is followed by a call to repentance and fasting before the Lord.

- The priests should be the most concerned of all the people because of their relation to the altar of God and to the people. This expression of humility before God should be accompanied with a solemn fast.
- “The day of the Lord” and a prayer for mercy (1:15-20).
 - Usually when the term “Almighty” is used, it is indicative of the mighty power of God. The judgment upon the world of the wicked is executed by His own omnipotence and controlling providence.
 - The locust plague was a dire warning that the Lord’s judgment of Judah was imminent. That day of the Lord was not to be one of vindication for Israel but was to signal its demise (cf. Amos 5:16-20). Not only was the day imminent, it was certain.
 - The need for penitence and prayer ought to have been obvious from the terrible conditions. Their food had been cut off so that there could be no feasts or offerings of gladness. Worst of all, this had affected the worship in the house of “our God.” The physical world too was a shambles.
 - In his cry to God the prophet acknowledges there was not at that time any other to whom one can turn in hours such as this. In utter helplessness and in the consciousness of his need for divine help, he cries to God.
- An urgent appeal for repentance (2:1-17).
 - The trumpet of warning (2:1-3).
 - The first warning and summons to look to God is followed by a more urgent warning and call to repentance.
 - With the suddenness of dawn spreading over the mountains, a mighty army has appeared, which cast its shadow over the entire face of the land.
 - The devouring fire before and after probably refers to the locusts themselves. One group would be followed by another.
 - A description of the calamity (2:4-11).
 - Joel describes the scene in vivid and flashing language. The sinking heart, the anguished expressions and the blood-drained faces express something of the terror that took hold of the people as they stood helplessly beholding the ruin of their land.
 - Joel sees this horde of locusts as the army of God, directed by Him and executing His will in carrying out His divine judgment, His righteous indignation against a people who apparently had turned to ungodliness and wickedness.

- Sincere repentance and fervent prayer are needed (2:12-17).
 - In spite of the terrible judgment and destruction caused by the locusts, it is not too late. If the people will turn to God with a heart of genuine penitence, fasting, rending the heart and not the garments, God will be merciful.
 - Their repentance would cause God to pour out a blessing instead of judgment. Their change of heart should be demonstrated by an assembly of the people and a fervent call upon God.

Joel 2:18-3:21

- The blessings promised (2:18-32).
 - The removal of God's army (2:18-27).
 - It is implied that the people responded to God's call by repenting and calling upon Him. Touched by the change, He was "jealous for his land."
 - Joel pictured the complete and total destruction of the invaders. The rotting insects in such immense quantities would cause a terrible stench to fill the air.
 - The people are called upon to rejoice as before they had been called upon to weep and mourn.
 - The locusts had been graciously used by God to turn the people to Him, to be followed by His wonderful outpouring of material plenty.
 - The outpouring of the Spirit and imminent judgment (2:28-32).
 - As the driving out of the locusts and the outpouring of the abundance of rain would bring forth material blessings and plenty, so now would the outpouring of the Spirit and the judgment upon the ungodly would bring forth a spiritual harvest.
 - The specific fulfillment is declared by Peter to have been on Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:16-21). It is evident from Acts 2 that only the apostles received the outpouring of the Spirit on that occasion.
 - Prophesying stands for the whole of teaching by inspiration of the Spirit. Visions and dreams indicate two forms of revelation by which God would make Himself known to the prophet (Numbers 12:6).
 - The outpouring of the Spirit and His work for the redemption and salvation of man would result in judgment on those who rejected His message. However, in the midst of His judgments, God always provided a means of escape. The terms "mount Zion" and "Jerusalem" are used to indicate the spiritual dwelling place of God among His people.

- Judgment on the nations (3:1-16).
 - Injustices committed against the people will be corrected (3:1-3).
 - The return of Judah and Jerusalem will be accomplished in a spiritual sense; that is, they occur in a time frame beyond the outpouring of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:11; cf. Romans 11:5; 14:12).
 - The “valley of Jehoshaphat” is not to be thought of as a literal place in Palestine, but as an ideal place where judgment is to be executed.
 - The low estimate of the value of human life is characteristic of heathen people and this conduct must be judged.
 - Neighboring nations will be carried off in captivity (3:4-8).
 - Joel next records God’s solemn promise of the sure execution of His judgment on the nations. He begins with God’s question as to their purposes regarding Himself.
 - As a result of this cruelty and as a vindication of God’s righteousness, He would stir up against these people the ones whom they had sold, bringing a recompense upon the heads of the Phoenicians and Philistines.
 - Destruction of heathen nations is by the power of God (3:9-16).
 - As God had judged those nations that had plundered, sold and scattered His people, so will He judge the nations who oppose and seek to destroy His spiritual people, the church.
 - Joel recognizes the destruction of mighty ones by mighty ones as a reckoning executed by the overruling providence and will of God, and calls upon God to use His mighty power in their destruction.
 - Once more the dark day in which the sun, moon and stars give no light heralds the approaching day of utter doom. The roaring from Zion and the uttering His voice from Jerusalem declares that the judgment is of divine determination. As He had led the army of locusts, so now He directs the judgment of the nations.
- Glorification of the people of God (3:17-21).
 - “In that day” describes spiritual Zion in the days of the Spirit. Therefore, the figures used in this section are a pictorial description of the spiritual plenty in the days of the Spirit.
 - In contrast to the plenty provided by the Lord for those who will receive it is the picture of the utter desolation of Egypt and Edom, long-time enemies of God and His people.
 - In the days of the Spirit God would establish His spiritual people and dwell among them. At the same time He would judge the world of the ungodly, bringing to a desolate end all who fight against Him.