

# Joel: Outline and Structure of the Book

A Simple, General Outline:

1. 1:1-2:11 – **Judgment on Jerusalem**
  - a. Locust Invasion (1:1-20)
  - b. Northern Army Invasion (2:1-11)
2. 2:12-17 – **Repentance**
3. 2:18-3:21 – **Salvation/Deliverance**
  - a. Divine Response to Israel's Repentance (2:18-19)
  - b. Northern Army Destroyed (2:20)
  - c. Land Restored (2:21-27)
  - d. Spirit Poured Out (2:28-32)
  - e. Judgment on Gentiles (3:1-21)

- Western students look for an orderly, flowing structured outline.
- Ancient Israel included other styles and structure to organize their writing:
  - Parallelism –
    - Parallel or corresponding in some way such as the parallelism of microcosm and macrocosm.
    - The use of successive verbal constructions in poetry or prose which correspond in grammatical structure, sound, meter, meaning, etc.
  - Chiasmus –
    - a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form
    - Example: '*Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.*'
  - Catchwords –
    - a briefly popular or fashionable word or phrase used to encapsulate a particular concept.
- Joel did not follow a modern outline expectation
  - Joel describes the destruction of the northern (2:20) before the healing of the land that occurs after the locust plague (2:21-27). But, the locust plague begins the book (1:2-20) before the northern enemy invades.
  - Describes the destruction of the northern enemy (2:20) then moves to the rains restoring the land (2:21-27) along with the Spirit coming on all people (2:28-32) only to return to the final judgment of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (3:1-21)
  - 2:18 is the pivot point of the book. At that point the focus of the book changes:
    - Before 2:18 it was lamentation and a call to repent
    - After 2:18 it is a message of salvation and deliverance by God
    - 2:18 is the divine decision
    - 2:19 gives a summation of the decree
      - This decree of 2:19 is given structured form beginning in 2:20

**The chiastic structure of 1:2-2:27:**

- A. Punishment: The Locust (1:2-20)
- B. Punishment: The Northern Army (2:1-11)
- C. TRANSITION: Repentance by people and Response by God (2:12-19)
- B. Forgiveness: Northern Army Defeated ((2:20)
- A. Forgiveness: Land destroyed by Locust is Restored (2:21-27)

- The restoration of the land (2:21-27 parallels the destruction of the crops in chapter 1
- The defeat of the northern army (2:20) parallels the destruction of Jerusalem in 2:1-11
  
- The promise of 2:23-24 reverse the calamities of 1:5-17
- The closing and call to praise in 2:26-27 parallels the introductory call to mourn of 1:2-3

**A second chiastic structure in 2:20-3:21:**

- A. Judgment: The Northerner Destroyed (2:20)
- B. Grace: Rain on the Land (2:21-27)
- B. Grace: Spirit Poured on all People (2:28-32)
- A. Judgment: All Nations Destroyed (3:1-21)

Note the connection to Ezekiel 36:26-27 when God “gives” the Spirit to his people, but Joel changes it to “pouring out” the Spirit to parallel the pouring rain. So, in Joel both the Spirit and the rain are poured

1:2-20

2:21-27

2-3 – elders to remember, mourn and tell	26-27 – people have plenty and praise
4 – locust eat all	25 - repaid for locust
5, 10 – wine gone, oil gone	24 – wine and oil restored
10-11, 17 – grain gone	24 – grain restored
12, 17 – land parched	23 – rain comes
12, 19- trees stripped bare	22 – trees bear fruit
18, 20- animals die	22 – animals in pasture
19-20 – land burned	21 – land not afraid