

Joel 1:1-7 – The consequences of Complacency!

TSK, HebrewLexicon, JFB, Poole, Handfuls, Geneva, Delitzsch, Trapp, Barnes, Clarke, Gray, Henry, Calvin, INT, Gill, Armstrong, Pulpit?

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: The prophet Joel likely prophesied **after the fall of Israel** to the Assyrians (the northern 10 ½ tribe) in 722 BC, and before the fall of Judah (the southern 1 ½ tribes) **to the Babylonians** in 586BC.

God was saying to Judah through Joel: **Consider your complacency, consider the plagues I will put on you, and consider how you must respond.**

The first 7 verses will show you 2 types of **plagues** the Lord would bring on the **complacent** Jews with the hope they would **repent**.

Our headings are:

Speak to the Jews and their children

Show them the plague of locusts

Show them the plague of war

Our goals are: **That you will learn from history how God could not endure carelessness from his covenant people, and therefore learn how you might endeavor to guard your heart and life and walk in Christian faithfulness.**

Speak to the Jews and their children

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

1. The name Joel means “Jehovah is God.”

Names are usually significant...especially the names of God’s prophet. For example: Haggai, the prophecy that addressed the carelessness of the returning Jews from Babylonian captivity from making sacrifices to God, means “My Feasts.” **In this case, God wanted to remind the Jews he was indeed the true God...their covenant God, Yahweh or Jehovah.** The Jews were having trouble remembering who the true God was! They saw themselves as their gods.

2 **Hear this**, you **elders**, And **give ear**, all you **inhabitants** of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers?

2. God called on the Jews through Joel to give special attention to what he was going to say.

Notice how he said “hear this,” and “give ear.”

3. God called on all the Jews – the leaders- prophets, priests, kings- and the people – to pay attention to what he was going to say.

Notice how he said “you elders,” and “all you inhabitants” of the land.

(“Land” could mean “earth” or “country.” Here it means country, Judah in particular, based on the context.)

4. God then talked to the Jews about something that had never happened before: Plagues were coming on their land.

In order to make his warning stronger and appear more certain, God described the judgment as if it were already there.

3 Tell **your children** about it, Let your **children tell their children**, And their **children another generation**.

5. God called on the Jews, leaders and people, not only to hear for themselves, but also to explain to their children why the plagues were coming.

Long before, in Moses' day, God had commanded the Jews to teach their children and grandchildren and all the succeeding generation what would happen if they turned away from God.

Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall **talk of them when you sit in your house**, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

And later he warned them again.

Psalms 78:6 **That the generation to come might know them**, The children who would be born, That they **may arise and declare them to their children**, 7 That they may **set their hope in God**, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; 8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

And more recently, he warned Judah again when Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians.

But Judah promptly compromised and invested in and adopted a Syrian god!

6. Lessons:

a. Read regularly from the whole Bible, not just the parts that speak of God's grace.

Read about God's judgment on sin.

If you don't teach God's commands to your children, you had better teach them God's condemnation.

b. God has to confront and sin because his holy nature demands it. God is confronting complacency in the church today! **God is not a grandfather who might tolerate wickedness to keep the affection of his grandchildren.**

c. As a father or mother, don't be afraid to speak of your own sins in front of your children and condemn your sins. If you don't expose your sins, your children will think that your sins were normal and they will sin in the same way.

Show them the plague of locusts

4 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.

1. God would send locusts to destroy Judah and he painted a very graphic picture of that destruction.

2. Locusts would often come in large swarms, so large that sometimes they could block out the sun!

(Many nations in Eastern Africa are expecting famines this year because the locusts have come up in an astounding way.)

This was what God had threatened to his people when they entered Canaan...as a warning to them.

Deuteronomy 28:38 "You shall **carry much seed out** to the field but **gather little in**, for the **locust shall consume it**. 39 "You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the **worms shall eat them**.

What horrible plagues. What devastation. Imagine the famine...the crying kids...the hopeless mothers...the diseases...

3. There were other times 4 judgments were predicted with different plagues.

a. Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 15:3 "And I will appoint over them **four forms of destruction**," says the LORD: "the **sword** to slay, the **dogs** to drag, the **birds** of the heavens and the **beasts** of the earth to devour and destroy.

b. Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 14:21 For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My **four severe judgments** on Jerusalem — the **sword** and **famine** and **wild beasts** and **pestilence** — to cut off man and beast from it?

c. Further, judgment was predicted to come from the 4 corners of the earth, north, south, east, and west.

These judgments by 4's meant that there was no chance of avoiding judgment.

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**.

4. The Jews were then called to wake up from their stupor...their drunkenness with their complacency...before the locusts came.

God knew how easy it was to become careless and compromising.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, **but let us watch and be sober**.

1 Peter 5:8 **Be sober, be vigilant**; because your adversary the devil walks

about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The tendency is to be lazy or complacent. Look at a stinging indictment of God's people before Israel fell in 722BC.

Amos 6:4 Who **lie on beds of ivory**, **Stretch out on your couches**, **Eat lambs** from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; 5 Who **sing idly** to the sound of stringed instruments, And **invent for yourselves musical instruments** like David; 6 Who **drink wine from bowls**, And **anoint yourselves with the best ointments**, But **are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph**.

5. On top of taking their food away by the locusts, the Lord then said he would take away their wine by the locusts.

Drinking here is used to represent all kinds of excesses that caused the Jews to ignore their responsibility to God.

Even the **new wine would be taken away**, let alone the good vintage wine. And God really did take away their wine, in 586BC when Babylon came! Babylon came and took all able-bodied men of Judah away as servants and slaves, and killing many of them.

The Jews then mourned for almost 70 years. They had no time for the 7th day of worship and rest, so God gave the land rest for 70 years. **God is extremely jealous of his worship.**

6. Lessons:

a. Just as God removed food, freedom, and security from his people in the past, so you must learn God can and will do the same to a people who turn their eyes away from following him, choosing rather to lust for the things he has made. There are some who say, "Don't say that Covid-19 is a judgment from God." Then what is it? Is it a blessing? Does God need to put a deadly disease on people who are pleasing him? No. Read Deuteronomy 28! Let us take warning.

b. But some men would rather lose their lives than their liquor. They love pleasure. They would rather lose their souls than their sins!

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

This is complacency...that leads to abandoning proper worship of God...and therefore incurring God's punishment. The church must **come back** to God and the world must **come to** God.

Show them the plague of war

6 For a nation has come up against My land, **Strong**, and **without number**;

His **teeth are the teeth of a lion**, and he has the **fangs of a fierce lion**.

1. God would use the Babylonians to destroy Judah, just as he used the Assyrians to destroy Israel, and take his people captive.

Again, God used the perfect tense to show certainty, acting as if this event has already happened.

2. The Babylonians who would come against Judah were strong, very strong.

They were large in number...even without number...it seems. Many nations did not bother to fight them because of their size.

They bit, and the bitten were done for. The Babylonians never let go.

They were aggressive...with teeth like a lion. The teeth of locusts are said to be harder than stone and make for a scourge!

They were as destructive as a lion. Lions don't leave much. In fact, the Babylonians used the lion as their emblem. The lion represented the king of Babylon. Saddam Hussain, who pretended to be the emperor of the Babylonian Empire, used the lion as his emblem. (He constantly fought against Iran (Persians) who had captured the Babylonian Empire.)

3. In fact, those 4 types of literal locusts that came on Judah pictured 4 kingdoms that were coming to punish Judah until Jesus.

Chewing locusts – meaning to cut short. This likely referred to the Babylonians, whose empire was suddenly cut short.

Swarming locusts – meaning to multiply. This likely referred to the Medo-Persians, which doubled their size.

Crawling locusts – meaning to lick up, or lap quickly everything in its path. This likely referred to the Greek empire that was known for speed and consuming power, literally running over the land without touching the ground.

Consuming locusts – meaning to eat up totally, likely referring to Rome which had an ever-increasing, consuming, empire.

7 He has **laid waste My vine**, and **ruined My fig tree**; He has **stripped it bare** and thrown it away; Its branches are made white.

4. God would use the Babylonians to destroy his vine and his fig tree – stripping the bark and exposing the tree to disease.

This was fulfilled when the Jews (including Hezekiah) stripped the gold off of the temple and sent it to their enemies.

5. Lessons:

a. God uses nations as his weapon to punish his people. Now there is no doubt the

nations are wicked and truly hate Christians, but God uses any tool – even wicked leaders. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was God’s tool! God said so. **Would the Canadian leaders have made it illegal to worship - which was commanded by God – while leaving the liquor stores open - if the churches were strong and effective?** The liquor lobby is lord in Canada!

b. Yes, God’s people today have given up God’s armor and so they can’t fight. They don’t know God’s Word. They have become too comfortable with the pleasures of this world. They don’t want to take a stand. Taking a stand might mean they would lose their comforts...their summer homes, their business, their reputation, their quietness, and their freedom.

c. If you aren’t willing to stand up for God, he might very well take away the things to which you are holding. So ask yourself: What or who controls how you live and what you do? What or who controls what you are willing to sacrifice for the kingdom?

Conclusion:

Because of the Jewish complacency and laziness, God sent a message through Joel to them: “I will send severe plagues of locusts and war on you to **make you starve and become slaves**, so you will come to **your senses.**”

Brothers and sisters:

a. The same warning against complacency is applicable to you today. God has sent a plague. Christians have been lazy and complacent. Evangelism is almost non-existent. We have talked a great talk, but have little passion for the things of the Lord. Instead, learn to delay luxuries and lesser things in order to do the work of the Savior.

b. How do you guard your heart so that you do not become complacent? Regularly refresh yourself of God’s love for you! Feed at his table and on his Word. You need close communion-with the Lord. What’s your devotional life like? What is your family worship like? How much of God’s Word have you taught your children?

c. And when you do sin and become complacent, respond, not as these Jews to whom Joel wrote, but as the Jews on Pentecost. They were “cut to the heart” and trusted in the Lord.

Finally: No one escapes God’s judgment. His arm is long and he will find you, reach you, and send you to hell. His enemies must die. If you don’t want to die as an enemy of God, but you want to be God’s child instead, ask God to count the full punishment of your sins on Christ. That’s all you need to do!