

November 24, 2019
“When God Relents”
Joel 1 - 3
Pastor Gary Hamrick

The judgment of God is the natural result of our disobedience to him. The people of Joel’s day experienced a devastating invasion of locusts as a sign of God’s judgment for their sin and disobedience. Joel also saw into our future, and he saw the time of the Great Tribulation as a sign of God’s judgment for a future generation. But in the midst of God’s judgment for our sin is his mercy to forgive us of our sins. Joel wrote about how compassionate, merciful, and loving God is, and that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Are you saved? Do you know what it means to have your sins forgiven and to be in a relationship with Jesus? The focus of Pastor Gary’s message is God’s mercy and his willingness to relent from judgment and forgive!

Historical Background

1. Nothing, except for his father’s name, is known about Joel’s life.
 - a. **Joel 1:1** - *“The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.”*
 - i. In Hebrew, Pethuel means persuaded of God.
 - b. In Hebrew, Yoel (correct spelling) means YAHWEH is God.
2. The Bible does provide one possible clue about when Joel prophesied, in that one verse in Joel and one in the book of Amos are virtually identical.
 - a. **Joel 3:16** - *“The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem...”*
 - b. **Amos 1:2** - *“... ‘The LORD roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem...’ ”*
 - c. Joel and Amos may have been contemporaries in ministry for the Lord.
 - d. Amos ministered during the time of King Uzziah, which was approximately 750 B.C.
 - e. The Babylonians captured the southern kingdom of Judah (586 B.C.).
 - i. Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah.

- ii. The northern kingdom was made up of ten tribes known as Israel, and the southern kingdom was made up of two tribes.
 - f. Peter quoted Joel in [Acts 2:16–21](#).
3. Bible scholars believe Joel ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah because there are references to the priests and their duties at the Temple, as well as Zion and God’s Holy Hill, which are references to Jerusalem.
 4. The purpose of the book of Joel was to warn people about a coming day of judgment and to encourage people about a gracious God who responds to repentance.

Past Judgment

5. Pastor Gary said, “As is typical of Old Testament prophets, there is a contemporary as well as a prophetic element to what they wrote. ... [Their] ministry was directed both to their own generation... [and pointing] to a time in the future.”
6. Joel wrote about a judgment from God that was in the immediate past, that came in the form of an exceedingly unusual and devastating invasion of locusts.
 - a. [Joel 1:2b, 4](#) – *“Has anything like this happened in your days, or even the days of your fathers? ... 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.”*
7. Pastor Gary said, “This [was] a little wakeup call compared to what [was] coming. The Assyrian army was going to come to the [northern kingdom of Israel]. The Babylonian army [was] coming to the [southern kingdom of Judah]. ... This is often the way that God deals with us. He gives us little nudges every once in a while, before the hammer has to come down. If we don’t respond to the little nudges, then guess what? It hurts more! ... [God sent locusts to get their attention. They would have known that this was judgment from God] because God spelled it out clearly in Old Testament books, particularly [Deuteronomy 28](#). [God instructed Moses to write down the blessings for obedience and the penalties for disobedience.]”
 - a. [Deuteronomy 28:15, 38, 42](#) – *“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. ... You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. ... Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.”*

8. Many different types of people experienced a wide range of emotions and trouble.
- a. Drunkards mourned because there weren't any grapes to make wine.
 - i. **Joel 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."*
 - b. Widows mourned because their husbands had died.
 - i. **Joel 1:7-8** - *"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. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth."*
 - c. Priests mourned because there wasn't anything left for a grain offering or to use to make a drink offering.
 - i. **Joel 1:9-10** - *"The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests mourn, who minister to the LORD. The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails."*
 - d. Farmers mourned.
 - i. **Joel 1:11-12** - *"Be ashamed, you farmers, wail, you vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree - all the trees of the field are withered..."*
 - e. Livestock suffered.
 - i. **Joel 1:18** - *"How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment."*
9. The last major swarm of locusts (grasshoppers not cicadas!) in Israel occurred in 1915. ¹
- a. "In his account of the devastation in The National Geographic, Colony member John Whiting wrote that the locusts were so voracious and numerous that they could swarm over an unguarded infant and devour its eyes within minutes."
 - b. Pastor Gary shared several statistics about locusts.
 - i. A swarm of locusts can cover an area up to 460 square miles, and there can be 80 to 100 million locusts per square mile!
 - ii. In 2004, one locust swarm in Morocco was measured at 142 miles long and contained 69 billion locusts!
 - iii. One million locusts eat as much food as 5,000 people do per day.
 - iv. One locust can eat up to its weight every day, so a swarm of locusts

¹ <https://www.loc.gov/collections/american-colony-in-jerusalem/articles-and-essays/the-locust-plague-of-1915-photograph-album/>

can eat more than 400 million pounds of vegetation per day.

Future Judgment

10. **Joel 2:1-2** *“Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; **for the day of the LORD** is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.”* (Emphasis added)
 - a. Joel used the phrase *“the day of the LORD”* five of the seventeen times in the Bible.
 - b. This phrase is used to refer to the Coming of Christ and the judgment he will bring because of the sin of rebellious people, not a specific day, although it can be. The phrase can also refer to a particular season or event.
 - c. Joel used this phrase to speak about a much more severe punishment than locusts!

11. Pastor Gary said, “Where there is sin and disobedience to the Lord, it must be met with his judgment, otherwise he would not be a just and holy God. If God ‘winked’ at our disobedience and did nothing about it, he would not be a just and holy God. And so, our sin will result in our punishment... if we don’t get right with him.”

12. Joel described the appearance of the future army that will come in judgment, and he used similes because he wasn’t able to describe far distant future warfare.
 - a. **Joel 2:4-5** - *“Their appearance is **like** the appearance of horses; and **like** swift steeds, so they run. With a noise **like** chariots over the mountaintops they leap, **like** the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, **like** a strong people set in battle array.”* (Emphasis added)

13. **Joel 2:30-31** - *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.”*
 - a. The apostle John used similar language when he wrote about the Battle of Armageddon and the Tribulation in the book of Revelation.
 - b. **Revelation 6:12-13** - *“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.”*

The Remedy

14. Pastor Gary said, “You cannot escape the fact that where there is disobedience against God, it will invite the judgment of God. ... But there’s a remedy to the judgment of God. ... The [remedy] is the same as what Joel told the people of his day as it is to [people in our day].”
15. **Joel 2:12-14** – “ ‘Now, therefore,’ says the LORD, ‘**Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.**’ So **rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.** Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him – a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?” (Emphasis added)
16. **Joel 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.**” (Emphasis added)
17. **Romans 10:9-11** – “[If] you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you **will be saved.** For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ ” (Emphasis added)
- a. Pastor Gary said, “Saved from what? Saved from the judgment of God because of [sin], saved from the consequences that we deserve because of our disobedience against God. Here are the plain facts. God is righteous and holy and perfect, and we are none of those things! We are sinful, [proud, and very] imperfect people. ... God is not measuring you against the behavior of other people or the heart of other people. ... God does not grade on the curve! ... God evaluates every single person on the basis of his or her own goodness... the problem [we have] is that none of us is good. So, when God looks at us, what does he see? He sees the same sinful nature in every single person. No one is good enough. He is the perfect standard against which all of us will be measured. ... [So, God] made gracious provision [for a way to have all of our sins forgiven and take us to heaven as our ultimate, eternal reward if we will turn from our sin and turn to him. ... God is motivated by love and his purpose is to redeem [us] from our sins and to bring us into right relationship with him.”
 - i. **Romans 5:8** – “[God] demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - ii. **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have

everlasting life.”

- iii. **1 Peter 2:24** - “[Jesus himself] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose [crucifixion] you were healed.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Joel 1:1-4; 2:12-14, 28-32** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the life of Joel. (See #2 through #4 above)
3. Provide an overview of **Deuteronomy 28**, and talk about the past judgment of God on the Jewish people. (See #5 through #7 above)
4. Read and discuss the Scriptures associated with the different types of suffering that came as a result of the locust plague. (See #8 and #9 above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments concerning sin, disobedience, and judgment. (See #10 and #11 above)
6. Read and discuss **Joel 2:30-31** and future judgment. (See #13 above)
7. Read and discuss **Joel 2:12-14, 32**. (See #14 and #16 above)
8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks and the associated Scriptures in his outline concerning what it means to be saved. (See #17 above)
9. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)