

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Bible Study Notes: Book of Joel*

*5/24/17*

#### *Chapter 2*

##### **An Army of Locusts - Verses 1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—<sup>2</sup>a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. <sup>3</sup> Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. <sup>4</sup> They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. <sup>5</sup> With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. <sup>6</sup> At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. <sup>7</sup> They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. <sup>8</sup> They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. <sup>9</sup> They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. <sup>10</sup> Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. <sup>11</sup> The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

**2:1** Joel was still describing the devastating effects of the locust plague (see 2:25). The alarm showed that the crisis was at hand. However, Joel implied that the locust plague would be only the forerunner of an even greater crisis if the people didn't turn from their sins.

**2:3** The Garden of Eden was Adam and Eve's first home (Genesis 2:8). Known for its beauty, here it is used to describe the beauty of the land prior to the devastation.

##### **Rend Your Heart - Verses 12-17**

<sup>12</sup> "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." <sup>13</sup> Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. <sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. <sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. <sup>16</sup> Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

<sup>17</sup> Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, "Spare your people, LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

**2:12-13** God told the people to turn to him while there was still time. Destruction would soon be upon them. Time is also running out for us. Because we don't know when our lives will end, we should trust and obey God now, while we can. Don't let anything hold you back from turning to him.

**2:13** Deep remorse was often shown by tearing ("rending") one's clothes. But God didn't want an outward display of penitence without true inward repentance (1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 23:1-36). Be sure your attitude toward God is correct, not just your outward actions.

### The LORD's Answer - Verses 18-27

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD was jealous for his land and took pity on his people. <sup>19</sup> The LORD replied to them: "I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations. <sup>20</sup> "I will drive the northern horde far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land; its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise." Surely he has done great things! <sup>21</sup> Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things! <sup>22</sup> Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. <sup>23</sup> Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. <sup>24</sup> The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. <sup>25</sup> "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. <sup>26</sup> You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. <sup>27</sup> Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

**2:18** Joel reached a turning point in his prophecy, moving from prophesying about an outpouring of God's judgment to prophesying about an outpouring of God's forgiveness and blessing. But this would come only if the people began to live as God wanted them to, giving up their sins. Where there is repentance, there is hope. This section of the book should feed that hope. Without it, Joel's prophecy could bring only despair. This promise of forgiveness should have encouraged the people to repent.

**2:21** Joel contrasts the fear of God's judgment (2:1) with the joy of God's intervention (2:21). On the day of the Lord, sin will bring judgment, and only God's forgiveness will bring rejoicing. Unless you repent, your sin will result in punishment. Let God intervene in your life.

Then you will be able to rejoice in that day because you will have nothing to fear. Before, there were fasting, plagues, and funeral dirges; then, there will be feasting, harvesting, and songs of praise. When God rules, his restoration will be complete. In the meantime, we must remember that God does not promise that all his followers will be prosperous now. When God pardons, he restores our relationship with him, but this does not guarantee individual wealth. Instead, God promises to meet the deepest needs of those who love him—by loving us, forgiving us, giving us purpose in life, and giving us a caring Christian community.

**2:26-27** If the Jews would never again experience a disaster like this locust plague ("never again will my people be shamed"), how do we explain the captivity in Babylon, the Jews' slavery under the Greeks and Romans, and their persecution under Hitler? It is important not to take these verses out of context. This is still part of the "blessings" section of Joel's prophecy. Only if the people truly repented would they avoid a disaster like the one Joel had described. God's blessings are promised only to those who sincerely and consistently follow him. God does promise that after the final day of judgment, his people will never again experience this kind of disaster (Zechariah 14:9-11; Revelation 21).

### **The Day of the LORD- Verses 28-32**

<sup>28</sup> "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. <sup>32</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

**2:28-32** The apostle Peter quoted this passage (see Acts 2:16-21)—the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by Joel—in his sermon at Pentecost. While in the past, God's Spirit seemed available to kings, prophets, and judges, Joel envisioned a time when the Spirit would be available to every believer. Ezekiel also spoke of an outpouring of the Spirit (Ezekiel 39:28-29). God's Spirit is available now to anyone who calls on the Lord (2:32).

**2:31-32** The "day of the LORD" is used here as God's appointed time to judge the nations. Judgment and mercy go hand in hand. Joel had said that if the people repented, the Lord would save them from judgment (2:12-14). In this day of judgment and catastrophe, therefore, some will be saved. God's intention is not to destroy but to heal and to save. However, we must accept his salvation or we will certainly perish with the unrepentant.