

NATURAL DISASTERS
jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org
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Joel 1:1-12

1. Some time ago I began a series of sermons comprised of one message from each book in the Old Testament.
2. We got through Hosea, skipped Joel, and looked at Amos.
3. The reason I skipped Joel was that I have had a hard time discerning what God wanted me to say concerning the message of Joel.
4. This message contains what I think God would have me emphasize.
5. By way of introduction let me point out some facts.

a. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, (Genesis 1:1) and at the end of human history as we know it God will destroy the current heavens and earth, and will then create new heavens and a new earth. 2 Peter 3:10-13

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 **But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**

b. The present creation is in the process of wearing out, running down, fulfilling its purpose.
(1) Psalm 102:23-28

He has weakened my strength in the way; He has shortened my days. 24 I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, your years are throughout all generations. 25 **"Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 26 "Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. 27 "But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end. 28 "The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You."**

(2) Isaiah 51:6-8

"Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment And its inhabitants will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane. 7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not fear the reproach of man, Nor be dismayed at their revilings. 8 "For the moth will eat them like a garment, and the grub will eat them like wool. But My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation to all generations."

c. Until this present creation fulfills its purpose the planet upon which we live will suffer what Paul referred to as birth pangs. Rom 8:18-25

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 **For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of**

childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

6. We do not know anything about Joel himself, nor do we know the time in which he lived and wrote, but we do know that the book was written due to an unprecedented locust plague that decimated the vegetation and crops upon which the people depended.
7. We also know that Joel was a prophet during a time when the Jewish temple was in use. See 1:14
8. With these thoughts in mind let's look at Joel's message under four headings.

I. A sad reality.

A. Jesus stated that natural and man-made disasters would occur on a regular basis.

Matthew 24:3-8

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6 **"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."**

B. Joel thought his situation was unique, but it was not.

1. It was the worst thing he had ever seen.
2. He knew it served as a warning, and required a response.
3. He also knew that it pointed to a far greater event referred to as the day of the Lord. See 2:1-2

NOTE: Since God is sovereign over His creation everything that happens is either allowed to happen or caused to happen by Him.

II. A worthy response.

A. Call upon God. Joel 1:13-16

Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, O priests; Wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth O ministers of my God, for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. 14 Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. 15 Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty. 16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes, Gladness and joy from the house of our God?

B. Amend our ways. Joel 2:12-14

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; 13 and rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil. 14 Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him, Even a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

NOTE: Prayer precedes revival, but so does repentance towards God.

III. A glad reality.

A. During the worst of times God is on His throne, and at work in His world through those who belong to Him.

B. God has always had His remnant, but we who live in the Church Age are blessed indeed because we are the beneficiaries of a great promise. Joel 2:28-29

"It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. 29 "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

C. This passage was quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost in a slightly different form. Acts 2:14-21

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy. 19 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 21 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

D. Verse 19 and 20 are future, but the rest of the passage refers to all who have or will repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. In the midst of the current madness, let us live our lives with gladness.

F. In the power of the Holy Spirit let us fulfill our God-given visions and dreams with hope and expectancy.

IV. A final resolution.

A. God will deal with all those who have rejected Him and mistreated His people.

Joel 3:1-3, 9-17

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have divided up My land. 3 "They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink. ...9 Proclaim this among the nations: prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! 10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man." 11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there. Bring down, O Lord, Your mighty ones. 12 Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. 16 The Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But the Lord is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. 17 Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more.

B. Note that these passages contain words of hope as well as words of warning.

APPLICATION

1. Sin not only corrupted mankind, it also impacted the creation.
2. Multitudes upon multitudes are in the valley of decision.
3. The question is will we be forewarned by present realities and prepare for the day of the Lord to which they point?
4. If we have decided for the Lord let us live lives that demonstrate that fact.
5. May we also seek to be God's instruments in the midst of the current difficulties.
6. Finally we are all dying people on a dying planet, and that reality should cause us to be sure that we are ready for what comes next.