

Intro to JOEL

Author: The author of the book is presumed to be Joel, himself. Not much is known about this minor prophet, other than the information given in the first verse of the book, which says that he is the son of Pethuel.

Background of Joel: Likewise, there is not enough information in the book to give a clear idea as to the historical climate, within, Joel was written. There are three schools of thought about this. One is that it was written during the reign of King Joash during the 9th century. Another is that it was written during the last days of the Kingdom of Judah, which would put it in the company of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk. The last theory puts it in the realm of 400 B.C., during the Persian period. All three hold to the idea that it was written before the exile back to Jerusalem.

Outline of the Book

The book of Joel is only three chapters long, and is logically divided at these chapter placements. I have labeled these chapter divisions with my own terminology, as I shared in the sermon on Sunday morning.

Chapter 1 : Desolation: Joel describes in great detail the desolation of the land of Judah by two forces: a plagues of locusts and famine in the land. In verse 14, he calls the people to a holy fast and a sacred assembly to seek God's Divine Intervention.

Chapter 2: Visualization: Chapter 2 is a wake-up call for Judah. Joel foretells of a "Day of the Lord" that is coming, and issues a plea for them to rend their hearts and return to the Lord. The latter part of chapter 2 is that famous passage, required in the book of Acts, of dreams and visions, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter days.

Chapter 3: Restoration. Joel ends the prophecy with a word concerning the restoration of Judah, but can also be interpreted prophetically as to the restoration of the Kingdom of God at the end of time.

Intro to AMOS

Author: Amos was an older contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah and was an active prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. He refers to himself as one of the shepherds of Tekoa, but the term probably means "herdsman," giving him the distinction in some theological circles of being the first "cowboy preacher." Amos lived in the kingdom of Judah, but preached in the northern kingdom of Israel. From the context of the first verses, Amos received this prophecy a couple of years before a great earthquake hit the region—an earthquake that Zechariah remembered almost 200 years later. (Zech 14:5)

Outline and Themes of the Book:

In a time of great external prosperity, Israel had become complacent and had completely forgotten their worship and reverence for God. They had resorted to idolatry, pagan worship, greed, corrupted leadership and oppression to those who were poor. The purpose of the book of Amos was to announce God's holy judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel and call them to repentance, to turn from their self righteous sins and idolatry.

I. Judgment of the Gentile Nations (1:2 - 2:16)

In the first section of the prophecy of Amos, stern judgments are issued against those Gentile nations for their sins and abuses. Each time, God uses the same verse as a theme, "for three sins, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath." The cities listed as recipients of God's wrath are: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab.

II. Judgment of Israel—the Oracles (3:1 - 6:14)

Through various oracles, the Lord proclaims to Israel that they should repent, but their coming judgment will certainly occur because of their arrogant sin against the weak and upright.

III. Judgment of Israel—the Visions (7:1 - 9:6)

God gives Amos a picture of the impending judgment through a series of visions.

A. The Locust Swarm. The Lord showed Amos a vision of a locust swarm which destroyed the harvest. Amos pleaded with the Lord to not bring the swarm against Israel, and God relented.

B. The Fire. The Lord showed Amos a vision of the coming judgment through fire, which would destroy the water sources and all the farm land. Amos again interceded on behalf of Israel and the Lord changed his mind again.

C. The Plumb Line. In the vision of the plumb line, God showed Amos a vision of Him standing beside a vertical wall with a plumb line in his hand. God proclaimed that he was getting ready to measure the house of Israel with the plumb line and judge them accordingly.

D. The Ripe Fruit. God showed Amos a basket of picked ripe fruit to proclaim that the nation's iniquity had ripened and that the Lord had to act with severe judgment.

IV. Redemption (9: 7 - 15)

Surely the eyes of the Sovereign LORD are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth— yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.

"For I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground. All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, "Disaster will not overtake or meet us."

"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

Intro to OBADIAH

The book of **Obadiah** is the shortest of the prophets, and is, in fact, the shortest book in the Old Testament with its one chapter of text. Obadiah's prophecy was probably written during the time when Jehoram was King of Judah and was primarily directed toward the Edomites, one of Israel's enemies. During Jehoram's reign, Judah was attacked and plundered by the Edomites, and during the reign of Ahaz, they were besieged again. According to Psalm 137:7, it was the Edomites who strongly encouraged Babylon to invade and destroy Jerusalem.

In verses 1 - 9, Obadiah declares the wickedness of the Edomites and gives examples of their pride (v. 8). Verses 10 - 14 tell of the transgressions and offenses of Edom. Obadiah implies that they should have acted like a brother to them, since they descended from brothers, Jacob and Esau. (v. 10). In verses 15 - 21, we read about the victory of Israel in the end (v. 18). Edom was utterly nonexistent by the 1st century A.D.

As with most of these prophetic books, the message and life lessons are almost always the same:

- Sin is a destroyer and always corrupts a people and a nation and prevents us from living "life to the fullest" that God wants us to live.
- Repentance is always the remedy. God is constantly calling His people to true and absolute repentance in order for His kingdom to go forward and for His people to be made whole.
- Restoration is always in His plan for our lives. God is the rebuilder of brokenness and seeks to restore us.