

Introduction

The book cannot be precisely dated but this serves the dehistoricized character and timelessness of its message. Joel appears to be a lament, a point which argues the unity of the book (IOT 368). We will classify it as postexilic (after both exiles) because of the designation of Judah as Israel (2:27; 3:2, 16; my people, Judah, Zion, Jerusalem are the sons of Israel).

Thus, we have a variation on the remnant theme: the remnant Israel, the new Israel, emerges from Judah.

A locust plague sets the lament in motion (1:4). The relation of this plague to the contents of chapter 2:1-11 is an issue of dispute. 1) Is 2:1-11 the same or another historical locust plague? 2) Is it metaphorical or allegorical for Israel's enemies? 3) Or, is it an extended metaphor based on the locust plague of chapter 1 that announces the Day of the Lord, the day of God's action as head of his army geared for judgment?

The last interpretation seems best especially in light of 2:11 (cf. 2:25, "locusts...my great army"). This is more than Judah (2:1) and the nations (2:6) facing a mass of insects.

1A. Theme statement

Joel preached a message of a sovereign God who does not ignore sin.

There is always a call to repentance (2:13) and all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved (2:32).

But God will enter into judgment against all nations to swing his sickle in the time of harvest (3:2, 13).

2A. NT application

1B. Election and the gospel overture go together.

The elect new Israel, the new 12, is a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:7-10). But this fact of election does not take away the overture: whoever calls will be saved (Joel 2:12-13, 32; Rom. 9:33; 10:11-13). Both are proclaimed by the same book of Joel and by the same Bible.

Through sin and judgment unfolding in history, God will save his image bearer by his efficacious call (cf. Rom. 8:30; 2 Thess. 2:13-14 with 1 Thess. 1:4-5) unto good works and words that glorify God on the earth (Matt. 5:16 in context; Eph. 2:10, created; Eph. 4:24, according to his image).

2B. God chastens whom he loves.

3B. He will vindicate his name among the nations.

4B. The Day of the Lord is now and not yet.

Peter applies Joel 2:28-32 to the pouring out of God's Spirit on all people, men and women, old and young, bond and free (Acts 2:14-21).

1C. Now

The day of the Lord is terrible judgment seasoned with mercy and salvation. The now of this day means blessing to the nations of the earth in the judgment of Israel, the corrupt generation that rejected the corner stone, and from which Peter's listeners are called to save themselves (Acts 2:40; with Matt. 21:34-36; 13:24-30, wheat and weeds).

What Joel applied to Israel alone, Paul applies to the true Israel (Rom. 10:12-13). "Those who call on the name of the Lord are those whom he has called (Joel 2:32)" [IOT 371].

Now judgment is on Israel not on the nations (Lk 4:23-30; Matt. 28:19-20).

Now the nations have the blessing of the Spirit. As there is a universal priesthood (1 Pet. 3:10) so there is a universal prophethood of all believers (IOT 371) bearing witness of God's message to the ends of the earth.

2C. Not Yet

The not yet of the day of the Lord will bring judgment on the nations of the earth. (Joel 3:2, 13).