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Joel

Locusts Will Destroy the Crops

1 Joel son of Pethuel received this message from the Lord:

- 2** Leaders, listen to this message!
 Listen to me, all you people
 that live in the land.
 Has anything like this happened before
 during your lifetime? No!
 Did anything like this happen
 during your fathers' lifetime? No!
- 3** You will tell these things to your children.
 Your children will tell their children.
 And your grandchildren will tell
 the people of the next generation.
- 4** What the cutting locust* has left,
 the swarming locust has eaten.
 And what the swarming locust has left,
 the hopping locust has eaten.
 And what the hopping locust has left,
 the destroying locust* has eaten!

The Locusts Arrive

- 5** Drunks, wake up and cry!
 All of you people that drink wine, cry.
 Why? Because your sweet wine is finished.
 You won't get another taste of that wine.
- 6** A large and powerful nation came
 to attack my country.
 Its soldiers were too many to count.
 Its weapons were as sharp as a lion's teeth
 and as powerful as a lion's jaw.

locust Insects, like grasshoppers. Locusts can quickly destroy all trees and plants in a farmer's fields. So locusts made the people very scared. Here, Joel might be talking about an enemy's army.

cutting ... destroying locusts These are the different names for the locusts. These may be different names for the same kind of locusts—only at different times of the locust's growth period.

- 7** It destroyed my grapevine.
 Its good vines withered and died.
 It destroyed my fig tree,
 stripped off the bark and threw it away.

The People Cry

- 8** Cry like the young woman
 that was ready to be married,
 and her husband-to-be was killed.
- 9** Priests, servants of the Lord, cry!
 Why? Because there will be no more
 grain and drink offerings
 in the Lord's temple.*
- 10** The fields are ruined.
 Even the ground is crying.
 Why? Because the grain is destroyed;
 the new wine is dried up,
 and the olive oil is gone.
- 11** Be sad, farmers!
 Cry loud, grape farmers!
 Cry for the wheat and for the barley!*
 Why? Because the harvest in the field
 is lost.
- 12** The vines have become dry.
 And the fig tree is dying.
 All the trees in the field—the pomegranate,
 the palm, and the apple—have withered.
 And happiness among the people is dead.
- 13** Priests, put on your clothes of sadness
 and cry loudly.
 Servants of the altar,* cry loudly.
 Servants of my God, you will sleep
 in your clothes of sadness.
 Why? Because there will be no more
 grain and drink offerings
 in God's temple.*

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

barley A kind of grain.

altar(s) A stone table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

The Terrible Destruction of the Locusts

¹⁴Tell the people that there will be a special time for not eating food. Call the people together for a special meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people that live in the land together. Bring them to the temple* of the Lord your God, and pray to the Lord.

¹⁵Be sad! Why? Because the Lord's special day is near. At that time, punishment will come like an attack from God All-Powerful. ¹⁶Our food is gone. Joy and happiness are gone from the temple* of our God. ¹⁷[We planted seeds,] but the seeds became dry and dead lying in the soil. Our plants are dry and dead. Our barns are empty and falling down.

¹⁸The animals [are hungry and] groaning. The herds of cattle wander around, confused. They have no grass to eat. The sheep are dying.* ¹⁹Lord, I am calling to you [for help]. Fire has changed our green fields into a desert. Flames have burned all the trees in the field. ²⁰Wild animals also need your help. The streams are dry—there is no water! Fire has changed our green fields into a desert.

The Coming Day of the Lord

2 Blow the trumpet on Zion.*
Shout a warning on my holy mountain.
Let all the people that live in the land
shake with fear.
The Lord's special day is coming.
The Lord's special day is near.
2 It will be a dark, gloomy day.
It will be a dark and cloudy day.
At sunrise, you will see the army
spread over the mountains.
It will be a great and powerful army.
There has never been anything
like it before.
And there will never be anything
like it again.
3 The army will destroy the land
like a burning fire.
In front of them, the land will be like
the Garden of Eden.

Behind them, the land will be like
an empty desert.

Nothing will escape them.

4 [The locusts] look like horses.

They run like war horses.

5 Listen to them.

It is like the noise of chariots*
riding over the mountains.

It is like the noise of flames
burning the chaff.*

They are a powerful people.

They are ready for war.

6 Before this army, people shake with fear.

Their faces become pale from fear.

7 The soldiers run fast.

The soldiers climb over the walls.

Each soldier marches straight ahead.

They don't move from their path.

8 They don't trip each other.

Each soldier walks in his [own] path.

If one of the soldiers is hit and falls down,
the others keep right on marching.

9 They run to the city.

They quickly climb over the wall.

They climb into the houses.

They climb through the windows
like thieves.

10 Before them, earth and sky shake.

The sun and the moon become dark.

And the stars stop shining.

11 The Lord calls loudly to his army.

His camp is very large.

That army obeys his commands.

That army is very powerful.

The Lord's special day

is a great and terrible day.

No person can stop it.

The Lord Tells the People to Change

12 This is the Lord's message:

"Now come back to me with all your heart,

[You did bad things,]

cry, cry and don't eat any food!

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

dying Literally, "being punished."

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

chaff The seed coverings and stems separated from the seeds of plants like wheat or barley. Farmers saved the seeds but let the wind blow the useless chaff away.

- 13 Tear your hearts, not your clothes.”*
Come back to the Lord your God.
He is kind and merciful.
He does not become angry quickly.
He has great love.
Maybe he will change his mind
about the bad punishment he planned.
14 Who knows, maybe the Lord
will change his mind.
And maybe he will leave behind
a blessing for you.
Then you can give grain and drink offerings
to the Lord your God.

Pray to the Lord

- 15 Blow the trumpet at Zion.*
Call for a special meeting.
Call for a special time for not eating.
16 Bring together the people.
Call for a special meeting.
Bring together the older men.
Bring together the children.
Bring the small babies
that still suck their mother’s breasts.
Let the bride and her new husband
come from their bedroom.
17 Let the priests, the Lord’s servants,
cry between the porch* and the altar.*
All of those people should say these things:
“Lord, have mercy on your people.
Don’t let your people be put to shame.
Don’t let other people tell jokes
about your people.
Don’t let people in other nations
laugh at us and say,
‘Where is their God?’”

The Lord Will Restore the Land

- 18 Then the Lord became excited about
his land.
He felt sorry for his people.

- 19 The Lord spoke to his people.
He said,
“I will send you grain, wine, and oil.
You will have plenty.
I won’t shame you among the nations
any more.
20 No, I will force those people from the
north* to leave your land.
I will make them go into a dry,
empty land.
Some of them will go to the eastern sea.
Some of them will go to the western sea.
Those people did such terrible things.
But they will be like a dead
and rotting thing.
There will be such a terrible smell!”

The Land Will Be Made New Again

- 21 Land, don’t be afraid.
Be happy and full of joy.
The Lord will do great things.
22 Animals of the field, don’t be afraid.
The desert pastures will grow grass.
The trees will grow fruit.
The fig trees and the vines will grow
plenty of fruit.
23 So be happy, people of Zion.*
Be joyful in the Lord your God.
He will be good and give you rain.
He will send you the early rains
and the late rains like before.
24 The threshing floors* will be filled
with wheat.
And the barrels will overflow
with wine and olive oil.
25 “I, the Lord, sent my army against you.
The swarming locusts
and the hopping locusts
and the destroying locusts
and the cutting locusts*
ate everything you had.
But I, the Lord, will pay you back
for those years of trouble.”

Tear your hearts, not your clothes People tore their clothes to show their sadness. Here God wants the people to be truly sad for the bad things they did.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

porch An open area in front of the temple.

altar(s) A stone table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

north The Babylonian army came from this direction to attack Judah. Armies from countries north and east of Israel often came this way to attack Judah and Israel.

threshing floor(s) A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

swarming locusts ... cutting locusts See Joel 1:4.

- 26 Then you will have plenty to eat.
You will be full.
You will praise the name
of the Lord your God.
He has done wonderful things for you.
My people will never [again] be ashamed.
27 You will know that I am with Israel.
You will know that I am the Lord your God.
There is no other God.
My people will never be ashamed again.”

God Will Give His Spirit to All People

- 28 “After this I will pour (*give*) my Spirit
on all kinds of people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.*
Your old men will dream dreams.
Your young men will see visions.*
29 At that time I will pour out (*give*) my Spirit
even on servants, both men and women.
30 I will show amazing things
in the sky and on the earth—
There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke.
31 The sun will be changed into darkness,
The moon will be changed into blood.
And then the great and wonderful
Day of the Lord will come!
32 And then, any person
that calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.
There will be survivors on Mount Zion*
and in Jerusalem,
just like the Lord said.
Yes, the survivors that the Lord is calling
will come [back].

Judah’s Enemies Will Be Punished

3 “Yes, at that time, I will bring back the
people of Judah and Jerusalem from
captivity. ²I will also gather all the nations
together. I will bring all these nations down
into Jehoshaphat Valley.* There I will judge
them. Those nations scattered my people,

Israel. They forced them to live in other
nations. So I will punish those nations. Those
nations divided up my land. ³They threw lots*
for my people. They sold a boy to buy a
prostitute.* And they sold a girl to buy wine
to drink. They even ...

⁴“Tyre! Sidon! All of you areas of Philistia!
You are not important to me!* Are you
punishing me for something I did? You might
think that you are punishing me, but I will
soon punish you. ⁵You took my silver and
gold. You took my precious treasures and put
it in your temples.*

⁶“You sold the people of Judah and
Jerusalem to the Greeks. That way, you could
take them far from their land. ⁷You sent my
people to that faraway place. But I will bring
them back. And I will punish you for what
you did. ⁸I will sell your sons and daughters to
the people of Judah. Then they will sell them
to the faraway Sabea people.” The Lord said
those things.

Prepare for War

- 9 Announce this among the nations:
Prepare for war!
Wake up the strong men!
Let all the men of war come near.
Let them come up!
10 Beat your plows into swords.
Make spears from your pruning hooks.*
Let the weak man say,
“I am a strong soldier.”
11 All of you nations, hurry!
Come together in that place!
Lord, bring your strong soldiers!
12 Wake up, nations!
Come to Jehoshaphat Valley!
There I will sit to judge
all the surrounding nations.

lots Sticks, stones, or pieces of bone used like dice for making
decisions. See Proverbs 16:33.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin. Sometimes this
also means a person that is not faithful to God and stops
following him.

You are not important to me Literally, “What are you to me?”

temples Buildings used for worship. Here, the temples were used
to worship idols.

pruning hooks These tools were used to prune (cut) branches of
trees. Read Isa. 2:4.

prophesy To receive special messages from God, and then teach
those things to people.

vision(s) Something like a dream that God used to speak to
people.

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on.
Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

Jehoshaphat Valley This name means, “The Lord judged.”

- 13 Bring the sickle,*
because the harvest is ripe.*
Come, walk on the grapes,¹
because the winepress is full.
The barrels will be full and spilling over,
because their evil is great.
- 14 There are many, many people
in the Valley of Decision.*
The Lord's special day is near
in the Valley of Decision.
- 15 The sun and the moon will become dark.
The stars will stop shining.
- 16 The Lord God will shout from Zion,*
He will shout from Jerusalem,
and the sky and the earth will shake.
But the Lord God will be a safe place
for his people.
He will be a place of safety
for the people of Israel.
- 17 "Then you will know
that I am the Lord your God,
I live on Zion,* my holy mountain.
Jerusalem will become holy.
Strangers will never pass through
that city again."

A New Life for Judah Promised

- 18 "On that day, the mountains will drip
with sweet wine.
The hills will flow with milk.
And water will flow through all
the empty rivers of Judah.
A fountain will come from
the Lord's temple.*
It will give water to Acacia Valley.
- 19 Egypt will be empty.
Edom will be an empty wilderness.
Why? Because they were cruel
to the people of Judah.
They killed innocent people*
in their country.
- 20 But there will always be people
living in Judah,
People will live in Jerusalem
through many generations.
- 21 Those people killed my people.
So I really will punish them!"
The Lord God will live in Zion!*

sickle A tool with a curved blade for cutting grain.

harvest is ripe This time of judgment is compared to harvest time.

Valley of Decision This is like the name, "Jehoshaphat Valley."

Zion The southeast part of the mountain Jerusalem is built on. Sometimes it means the people of God living in Jerusalem.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

killed innocent people Literally, "shed innocent blood."