



The Lord Roars from Judah

The nation of Israel was enjoying a season of prosperity and strength that hadn't been known since they separated from Judah. King Jeroboam II seemed a competent economic and military leader. Assyria had quieted down and seemed to pose no further threat. Israel's borders expanded, retaking parts of Syria and Philistia. By all outward appearances, things couldn't be better in Israel. It was during this time that God called a nobody—a man from Judah who was a shepherd and a “dresser of sycamore figs” to prophesy against Israel. This man's name was Amos. Despite his apparent lack of credentials, he fulfilled God's task, and brought a scathing rebuke against Israel. By outward appearances Israel was strong and poised for success. Inwardly she was rotten and corrupt, and soon she would meet her end. Amos acted as God's spokesmen, personifying God's roaring from Judah—something that should be feared as one fears a lion's roar in the wilderness.

Amos began his message with a series of condemnations against Israel's neighbors, including Judah. This must have pleased the Israelites. Then Amos turned his attention to Israel. The nation had become grossly corrupt. They enjoyed material wealth in excess and to the point of immoral decadence. Not only that, but they gained their wealth by oppressing the poor. Justice was not valued, and immorality, evil, and greed permeated every level of society from the top to the bottom. Remarkably, this decadence was accompanied by feigned piety! “Religious fervor was high, but true spiritual devotion to God was utterly lacking.”¹ Israel had mixed elements of true worship with varieties of paganism, and this too brought God's wrath. They had been the chosen people of God, yet they had broken their covenant with Him. For their stubborn rebellion, the Day of the Lord—a terrible time of judgment—was coming.

¹ The Minor Prophets by Homer Hailey, pg. 85



Amos' Visions

Amos 7:1—9:10 contains 5 visions (and a brief narrative in between) of Amos concerning the pending judgment of Israel.

Vision of the Locusts (7:1-3) God shows Amos a vision of a terrible locust plague. Amos intercedes and God relents

Vision of Fire (7:4-6) Amos sees a vision of a destroying fire. Again he intercedes, and God relents.

Vision of the Plumb Line (7:7-9) God appears as measuring a wall. He is measuring Israel—and she proves crooked.

Vision of Summer Fruit (8:1-14) Amos sees a vision of a basket of summer fruit. This represents Israel as ripe for the harvest of judgment.

Vision of God by the Altar (9:1-10) God speaks of the certainty and totality of Israel's judgment. God's wrath cannot be escaped.

Outline of Amos

- The Prophet (1:1)
- Judgment on Israel's Neighbors (1:2—2:5)
- Judgment on Israel (2:6-16)
- Three Sermons of Judgment (3:1—5:17)
 - Israel's Present Guilt (3)*
 - Israel's Past: Unheeding God's Word (4)*
 - Israel's Future: Destruction (5:1-17)*
- Three Woes Against Israel (5:18—6:14)
 - Woe to Idolaters (5:18-27)*
 - Woe to those at Ease (6:1-3)*
 - Woe to the Immoral (6:4-14)*
- Five Visions of Judgment (7:1—9:10)
 - The Locusts (7:1-3)*
 - The Fire (7:4-6)*
 - The Wall and the Plumb Line (7:7-9)*
 - The Basket of Summer Fruit (8:1-14)*
 - God by the Altar (9:1-10)*
- Promises of Hope & Restoration (9:11-15)

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Joel and Amos The Day of the Lord

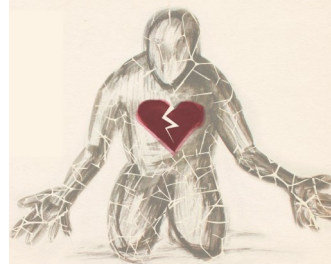
Overview

Joel is the second of the Minor Prophets in our Old Testaments, and it is a unique book. Nothing is known about Joel other than he was the son of a man named Pethuel. Unlike many other books of prophecy, the book of Joel has virtually no historical markers to help us know when it was written. No kings are mentioned, so we can't be certain when Joel served as a prophet. While Joel is a short book, it contains a powerful message. The prophet begins by describing a terrible locust plague that had decimated the lands of God's people. This plague was God's judgment for the people's sin and rebellion. Joel calls the nation to repent and turn to the Lord in the final verses of chapter one. While chapter one focuses on a judgment that had already happened, chapter two looks forward to an impending judgment. This impending judgment will make the previous judgment look like a small thing. This time, the Lord calls the people to repentance—true repentance that is more than just outward show. The remainder of chapter two describes the blessings of God on those who truly repent. The final chapter discusses God's judgment upon the nations. Throughout the book, the “Day of the Lord” is a key theme. This refers to God's judgment. The Day of the Lord is a dark and terrible day for those who oppose God. For those who repent, humble themselves, and turn to God, however, the Day of the Lord is a great day of deliverance!

Suggested Reading Schedule

- Monday: Joel 1-3
- Tuesday: Amos 1-3
- Wednesday: Amos 4-5
- Thursday: Amos 6-7
- Friday: Amos 8-9

Hearts Not Garments



The book of Joel is a stark reminder of God's judgment towards sin, as well as His mercy when people repent. Those who continue in sin face certain destruction. But those who humble themselves and repent can hope in abundant provision and life. When it comes to repenting, however, it must be genuine. Mankind has always been tempted to fake his religion, but God will have none of it. Just like people today, the ancient Jews were often guilty of simply going through the motions, or trying to look like they were obedient. In Old Testament times, the tearing of one's clothes could be a sign of intense grief and repentance. Of course, the dramatic display could be just that—an outward show without an inward change. Thus, God calls His people to something greater. In Joel 2:13 God's people are implored to return to God by, “rend[ing] your hearts, not your garments.” God is not interested in mere show and drama. God desires a real, true, inward change. Real inward change will, of course, bring about external actions (such as feasting and weeping cf. v. 12). Going through motions of repentance, however dramatic, without a true change of heart will never save us though. To repent means to “Return to [God] with all your heart.” The penitent heart is completely given back to God. It does not hang on to any part to the world and it's vices.



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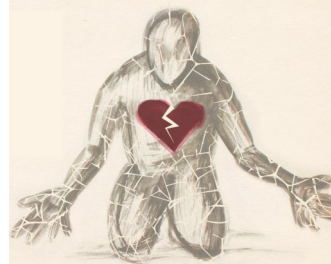
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