

Prepare for the day(s) of the Lord:

Joel 1v1-2v17

This is the first half of a whistle-stop two week series in Joel! We need to use broad-brush strokes as there's lots of ground to cover...!



We essentially split the passage into 2, concentrating in the first half upon the judgments from the Lord, and then in the final section upon his mercy and the hope that they can (and we) have.

One of Joel's key points is for us to look back to chapter 1, learn from the lessons of the past and live in light of what's to come in the future.

Judgment from the Lord (1v1-2v17)

1. Has come and is coming

Commentators aren't united on this but I read Joel 1 as a judgment that has happened, and Joel 2 as what is to come at the final judgment. The focus changes and expands away from simple locust imagery to a more general army that signifies judgment. The imagery of chapter 2 is meant to make us feel the weight of what is to come with talks of trumpets, darkness, cavalry, chariots and fire.

2. Is universal

Everyone is addressed – all of an agricultural community will be affected as the crop fails (see v2-4, 5-7, 11) and especially as they are unable to sacrifice as necessary. The effect of the judgment is 1 is also to affect generations to come – see v3.

3. Is de-creational

Lots of the language of the judgments are de-creational – they talk of the created world becoming chaotic & unraveling. There's talk of darkness (2v2,10) and lacking fertility (1v19-20). The type of judgment echoes the Exodus judgment (except God's people have become his enemies). Deut 28v29, 38 and 42 show us what has actually happened for God to judge them – they've turned their backs on him.

Return to the Lord (2v12-17)

v14 gives us a glimpse of optimism – who knows? Maybe the Lord will relent? The people are called to return with all their hearts (rather than simply an outward show) – from the core of who they are. 2 reasons are given to encourage us to return:

1. Because of God's character – see v13. He is holy and just... but also gracious and compassionate. And all are to cry out to him (just as all were affected by the judgment, so all are to return – v15-17).
2. Because of God's glory – v17. They appeal to the Lord's reputation & fame among the nations.

As Christians we can approach v14 with certainty. Jesus took the darkness and judgment for us, so that as we return to God with all our hearts & trust him, we know he will not punish us.

Here are some possible thoughts and questions.
Please be selective and adapt them for your group:

Possible Questions

How do you feel about God's judgment? Why?

Read Joel 1v1-2v17.

What strikes you about the language?

Who is affected by the judgment?

How are they affected?

How are we to return to the Lord?

Who is to return?

Why is simple garment rending not sufficient?!

What does he want instead?

What 2 reasons does he give to encourage the people to return?
(v13 & v17)

How do they motivate us to return to the Lord?

Why can Christians have absolute confidence as they return to him?

What 2 things can you take away from this study? Share them with the group and pray for each other.