

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" ---- Volume IV Number 10

JOEL: "Jerusalem Overrun and Eaten by Locusts"

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 46th email sermon in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message is about the book of Joel, the second of the Minor Prophets. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, or use components of it!

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

JOEL: "Jerusalem Overrun and Eaten by Locusts"

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Time: Approximately the last half of the 9th century BC, or about 850 to 810 BC

Recipients: The Southern Kingdom - usually called "Judah"

Theme: As locusts devastated the land, so God's judgment will devastate Judah.

Form: An analogy between the locust catastrophe and coming judgment

Key Words: "the day of the LORD" is used six times 1:15 (2); 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14

"Judah" is used 6 times; "Jerusalem" 6 times; "locust" 3 times KJV -- 10 in NASB

Chap. One:

Locust infestation has destroyed all crops and vegetation (1:4-7). A great famine followed (1:9-12).

Chap. Two:

Warning is sounded-- judgment and destruction is coming (2:1-2). True repentance is needed. (2:12-14) An important assembly (2:15-18). A day of restoration (2:25-31).

Chap. Three:

The "good news" continues (3:1-7). Plows into swords; pruning hooks into spears (3:10). Zion, Jerusalem the point from which the Lord roars (3:16-18)

Joel 1:1-12

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, O elders, and listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days or in your fathers' days?

3 Tell your sons about it, and let your sons tell their sons, and their sons the next generation.

4 What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; and what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; and what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

5 Awake, drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you wine drinkers, On account of the sweet wine that is cut off from your mouth.

6 For a nation has invaded my land, Mighty and without number; its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness.

7 It has made my vine a waste, and my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away; their branches have become white.

8 Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.

9 The grain offering and the libation are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests mourn, the ministers of the LORD.

10 The field is ruined, the land mourns, for the grain is ruined, the new wine dries up, fresh oil fails.

11 Be ashamed, O farmers, wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

12 The vine dries up, and the fig tree fails; the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, all the trees.

(NAS)

1. God never promised that our walk with Him would be free of adversity.

Job 14:1-2

1 Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. (KJV)

John 16:32-33

32 "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (NAS)

2 Tim 3:11-12

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (KJV)

Job, Jesus, and Paul all knew this fact: Life always brings good AND bad!

A man met a little fellow on the road carrying a basket of blackberries,

and said to him, "Sammy, where did you get such nice berries?" "Over there, sir, in the briers!" "Won't your mother be glad to see you come home with a basket of such nice, ripe fruit?" "Yes sir," said Sammy, "she always seems glad when I hold up the berries, and I don't tell her anything about the briers in my feet." The man rode on. Sammy's remark had given him a lesson, and he resolved that henceforth he would try and hold up the berries and say nothing about the briers.

2. It is always right to approach the Lord with a contrite heart.

Joel 2:11-18

11 And the LORD utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?

12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning;

13 And rend your heart and not your garments. "Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and relenting of evil.

14 Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him, even a grain offering and a libation for the LORD your God?

15 Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber.

17 Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare Thy people, O LORD, and do not make Thine inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and will have pity on His people.
(NAS)

Repentance is an essential theme in the Old and New Testament alike.

Matt 4:17

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mark 6:12

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

Luke 13:2-3

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 3:19-20

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Acts 17:30-31

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

The rending of garments was a cultural attribute often repeated. Joel said God wanted "torn hearts, not torn clothes." In other words, repentance must be genuine.

An American physician stated that he had known a hundred or more instances, in his practice, of people who, in prospect of death, had been hopefully converted, but had afterwards recovered. Of all these he only knew of three who devoted themselves to the service of Christ when they got well. An English doctor once told that he had known three hundred sick people profess repentance and faith when they thought they were dying, but who afterwards recovered. Only ten of these gave evidence of reality by a change of life.

3. God's People Know that there is always HOPE!

Joel 2:19-27

19 And the LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied in full with them; and I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

20 "But I will remove the northern army far from you, and I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, and its vanguard into the eastern sea, and its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, for it has done great things."

21 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, for the LORD has done great things.

22 Do not fear, beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.

23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the LORD your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before.

24 And the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.

25 "Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

26 "And you shall have plenty to eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; then My people will never be put to shame.

27 "Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame. (NAS)

Thomas Andrew Dorsey was a black jazz musician from Atlanta. In the twenties he gained a certain amount of notoriety as the composer of jazz tunes with suggestive lyrics, but he gave all that up in 1926 to concentrate exclusively on spiritual music. "Peace in the Valley" is one of his best known songs, but there is a story behind his most famous song that deserves to be told.

In 1932 the times were hard for Dorsey. Just trying to survive the depression years as a working musician meant tough sledding. On top of that, his music was not accepted by many people. Some said it was much too worldly--the devil's music, they called it. Many years later Dorsey could laugh about it. He said, "I got kicked out of some of the best churches in the land." But the real kick in the teeth came one night in St. Louis when he received a telegram informing him that his pregnant wife had died suddenly.

Dorsey was so filled with grief that his faith was shaken to the roots, but instead of wallowing in self-pity, he turned to the discipline he knew best--music. In the midst of agony he wrote the following lyrics:

**Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, help me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light;
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home.**

If you live long enough, you will experience heartache, disappointment, and sheer helplessness. The Lord is our most precious resource in those hours of trauma. "The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." (Ps. 9:9) Tom Dorsey understood that. His song was originally written as a way of coping with his personal pain; but even today it continues to bless thousands of others when they pass through times of hardship.

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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