

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Joel

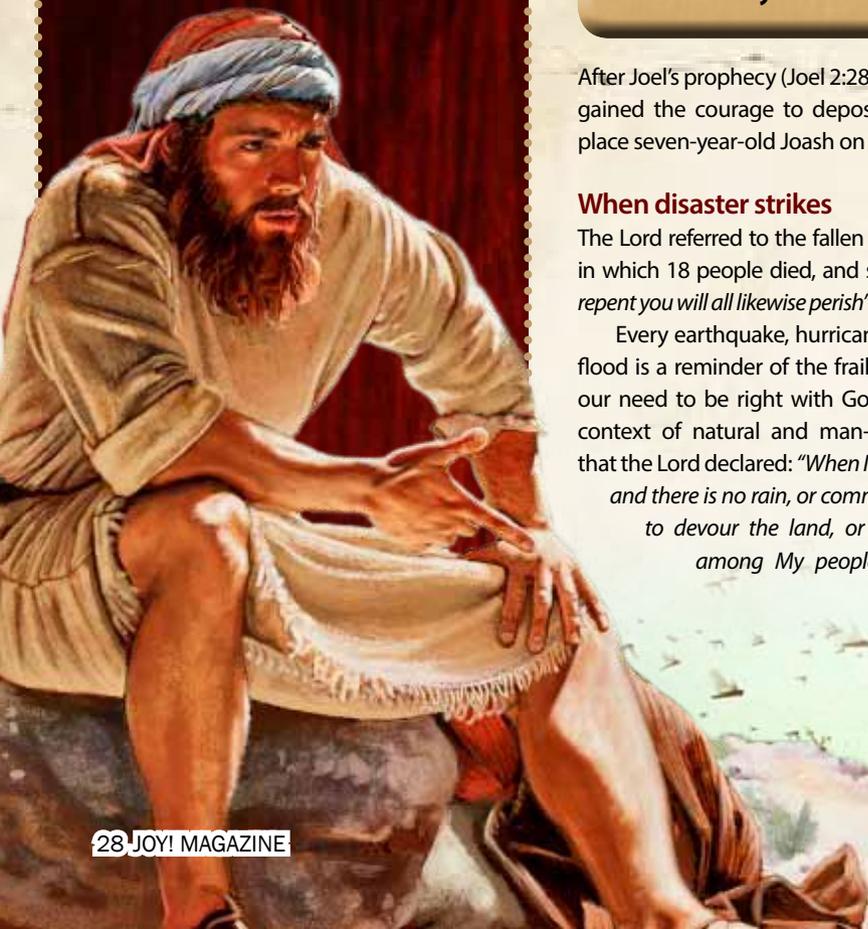
—by Peter Hammond

“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.” Joel 2:32



Who was Joel?

Joel, the son of Pethuel, prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the 9th century B.C, while Hosea was prophesying to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As a young man Joel would have been exposed to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Joel is one of the earliest of the written prophets. Joel means “Jehovah is my God.” Joel focuses on the Holiness and Judgement of God.



The books of 1 and 2 Kings provide the historic background for the ministry of Joel. Between 841 to 835 B.C. Queen Athaliah ruled Judah. Athaliah had been the Queen Mother and, when her son died, she seized the throne and murdered all of her grandsons. Except for Joash, who was hidden in the Temple, by the High Priest, to preserve the line of David.

Athaliah was the daughter of the notorious Jezebel, who had wrought havoc in Israel.

who are called by My Name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land” 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

Ruined harvest

The nation of Judah faced drought, bushfires and starvation. The economy came to a standstill. Joel’s prophecy was given at the time of harvest, The Feast of Tabernacles. At the very

Joel makes clear that salvation is not automatic, as if a nation as a whole can be saved by being Hebrew. God calls people to be saved by turning to Him and rejecting sin.

After Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32), the people gained the courage to depose Athaliah and place seven-year-old Joash on the throne.

When disaster strikes

The Lord referred to the fallen tower in Siloam in which 18 people died, and said: *“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* Luke 13:5.

Every earthquake, hurricane, drought and flood is a reminder of the frailty of life and of our need to be right with God. It was in the context of natural and man-made disasters that the Lord declared: *“When I shut up heavens and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people*

time when they should have been celebrating the harvest of their crops, they were mourning the devastation of the plague of locusts.

“Awake, you drunkards and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine that has been cut off from your mouth” Joel 1:5. *“The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails”* Joel 1:10. Joel describes present desolation and future danger.

Blow the trumpet

Joel calls the nation to repentance: *“Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the House of the Lord your God, and cry out to the*

A plague of locusts

The prophecy of Joel begins with a natural disaster. A plague of locusts had devastated the country. Swarms of locusts of up to 600 million insects have been recorded, eating up to 80 000 tonnes of food a day. They can not only strip trees of their leaves but of their bark as well. *"What the chewing locusts left, the swarming locusts have eaten; what the swarming locusts left, the crawling locust has eaten; what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten"* Joel 1:4. In Exodus 10 the eighth plague (of locusts) was sent by God on Egypt. In Deuteronomy 28 the Lord warned that one of the curses of disobedience would be plagues of locusts.



Lord" Joel 1:14. Joel makes clear that salvation is not automatic as if a nation as a whole can be saved by being Hebrew. God calls people to be saved through faithful messengers and people, in turn, must call on God, turn to God and turn from sin.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My Holy Mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the Day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand" Joel 2:1. But the people failed to repent after the plague of locusts and

desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them" Joel 2:3. (Joel 2 parallels Revelation 9, where a plague of locusts is described followed by an army from the East of 200 million).

After describing the terrifying destruction that will come from these invaders from the East, Joel reveals: *"The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the one who executes His Word. For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?"* Joel 2:11. These foreign invaders who would destroy

Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple itself, were commanded by God Himself! The promises to Israel were always conditional and are forfeited by those who abandon God. There is no future for those who have no use for the Lord.

The Day of the Lord

Joel mentions the Day of the Lord five times and other prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zephaniah and Malachi also mention the Day of the Lord 19 times. The Day of the Lord is also »

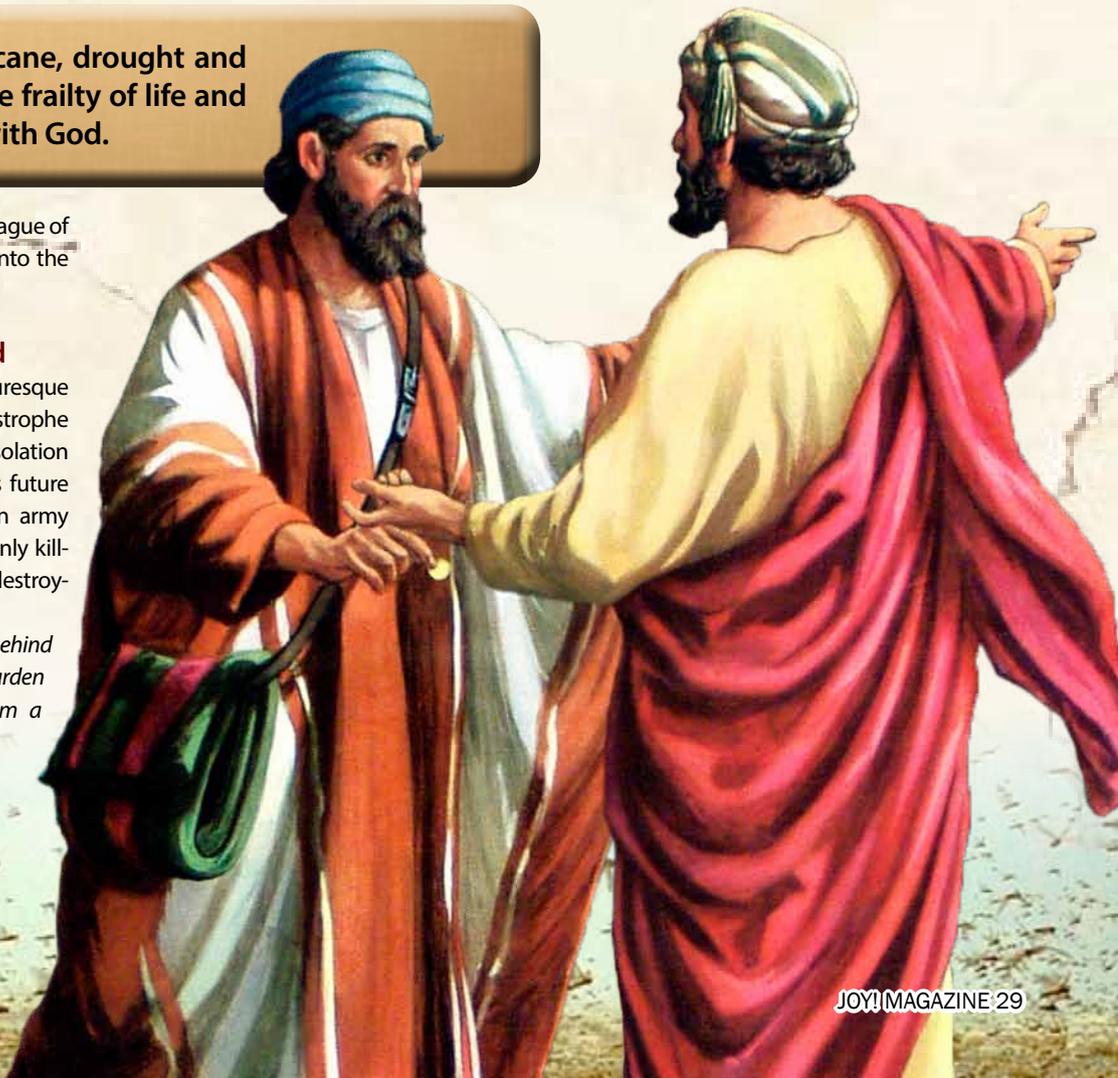
Every earthquake, hurricane, drought and flood is a reminder of the frailty of life and of our need to be right with God.

so, in chapter 2, Joel warns of another plague of a huge invading force that will march into the land and destroy everything.

Babylonian invasion prophesied

In arresting, vivid, descriptive and picturesque words Joel described calamity and catastrophe which will bring devastation and desolation to the land. Joel warns of an ominous future threat, as he describes the Babylonian army that would wage scorched earth, not only killing the people, and the livestock, but destroying even the vegetation.

"A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a



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mentioned in the New Testament (1 Cor 5:5, 2 Cor 1:14, 1 Thess 5:2, and 2 Peter 3:10). Man has his day. The devil has his day. But the time is coming when the Lord will have His Day.

The Day of the Lord is coming when God will have His final say and He will bring the whole world under His rule. God will judge everyone, but He will first deal with His people. The Lord will bring punishment on His backslidden people who have violated His Covenant. When the disciples asked Jesus "when will the Kingdom be restored?" He told them to go and preach the Gospel to all nations.

your Saviour? Or is He your Judge?

A call to repentance

"Now, therefore says the Lord, Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" Joel 2:12-13. The Bible emphasises three aspects of Repentance:

- **Conviction:** a change of mind,
- **Contrition:** a change of heart, and

repentance and leads to restoration.

The Lord promises to restore the year that the locusts have eaten. All of us mourn lost opportunities, wasted time, ruined relationships and wasted years. "If only!" We so often regret our poor decisions and squandered opportunities. Here the Lord promises restoration of the years that the locusts have eaten. In His supernatural way, God is able to do a lot with a little. He who could feed thousands with just five loaves and two fish, is able to not only add to our lives, but multiply His blessings upon it. Joel promises a total restoration. Not only a physical restoration of the crops but also a spiritual restoration.

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When will you respond?

We have a choice: Do you want God's discipline now, or God's Judgment later? The question is not, will you bow, but when? You can bow to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord now, or you will be compelled to bow before Him as the Eternal Judge later. Is Jesus

- **Conversion:** a change of life.

It is not enough to confess our sins; we also need to reject sin mentally, to loathe it, and to forsake it. Repentance involves a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of habits, and a change of behaviour.

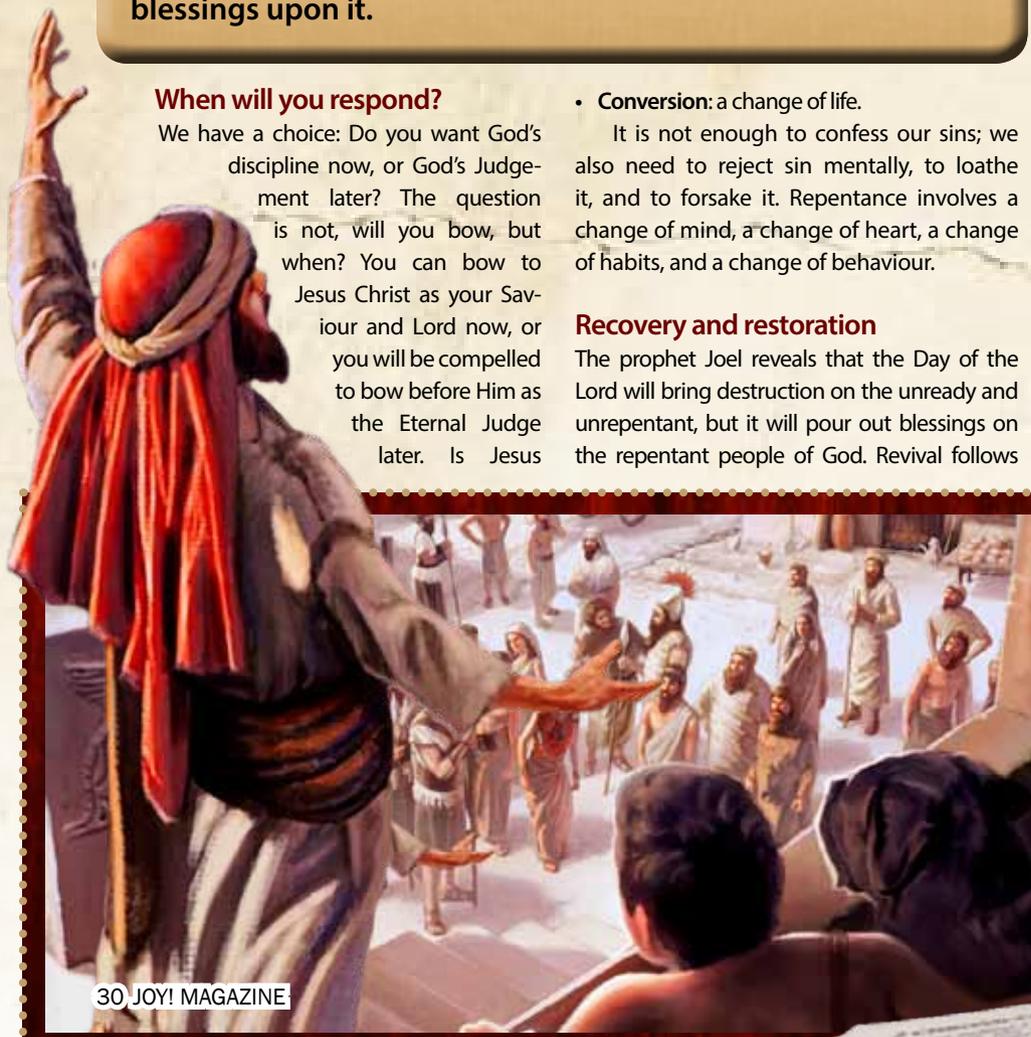
Recovery and restoration

The prophet Joel reveals that the Day of the Lord will bring destruction on the unready and unrepentant, but it will pour out blessings on the repentant people of God. Revival follows

The valley of decision

Chapter 3 has a vision of the Kidron Valley on the Eastern side of Jerusalem, the Valley of Decision. God issues a challenge to the nations to prepare for war, to assemble and to see how far they can dare to advance in a war against Almighty God. For the Day of the Lord is coming when He will intervene and judge the nations. God will have the final Word.

It is His decision that will decide our eternal destiny. **Where will you spend Eternity?** It is futile to attempt to fight against God. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Eternal Judge, is more than a Conqueror. The Lord will roar, His voice will shake the earth. The Lord will be a shelter for His people and the strength of His children. "So you shall know »



Rend your heart

Joel calls for true repentance. "Rend your heart, and not your garments..." It is not what we do with our clothes. When it comes to repentance, it is our heart and mind that matters. We are in a dynamic relationship with God. The Lord tells us how to pray: we must plead for mercy with fasting, with weeping and with mourning, seeking God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. And the heart of the Gospel is change. Changed hearts, changed minds and change lives.

"I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams."

Joel 2:28-29

that I am the Lord your God" Joel 3:17.

The question is not: Do you accept Jesus, but **does Jesus accept you?** The question is not: Will you open your door to Christ, but **will He open His door to you?** He is God. It is not all about you, it is all about Him. You need to ask, seek and knock on His door and seek entrance to His Kingdom.

The promise of Pentecost

It is this very passage, (Joel 2:28-32), that the Apostle Peter quotes from in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost: *"This is what was spoken*

Three thousand people called on the Name of the Lord at Pentecost and were added to the Church that day.

The fountain of Living Water

"And it will come to pass in that day...a Fountain shall flow from the House of the Lord...from generation to generation" Joel 3:18-20. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Living Water that flows into the wilderness and brings life where there is death, bringing forgiveness of sins and freedom from bondage for His people, from generation to generation and

The question is not, will you bow, but when? You can bow to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord now, or you will be compelled to bow before Him as the Eternal Judge later.

by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy...before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" Acts 2:16-21.

forever. Jesus is the Living Water. He is our Temple. He will bless the nations. ■

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Jesus in Joel

Jesus will pour out His Holy Spirit on His people *"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."* Joel 2:28-29.

