

Joel

Joel 1:1-3:21

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-11-24

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I. Introduction - locust plagues are scary

When I was a child in Ethiopia I witnessed one the scariest things I have ever seen - a locust plague. That may surprise you that I considered that to be the scariest, given some of the super-crazy things I have done in my life. But I was a kid and I had never seen anything like this before. The sky was so thick with locusts that it was almost as dark as night - until they landed. The estimated billions upon billions of locusts were swarming so thickly that you couldn't see the ground. And the noise of their legs and wings was deafening. In my memory the sound was sort like the combined sound of a jet engine running, and the loud crackling sounds of a forest fire. It's hard to describe; but it was very eerie. Initially I thought it might be fun to run out into the cloud of insects, but within seconds I was so scratched up that I ran back inside.

HistoryNet tells of a similar locust plague that hit the Great Plains of the United States in 1874. Even Nebraska was hit hard. They said that the insects blotted out the sun for as long as six hours in some places. When they finally descended to the ground, they covered every shrub, plant, and tree, breaking off large branches with their combined weight. They were a foot or more deep on the ground (piling on top of each other), competing for every fiber that they could eat. Once the green vegetation was gone, they started eating the bark and then the wood. Even wooden implements like rakes and pitchforks had the handles completely gnawed off. They ate the wool off the backs of the sheep. There were reports of at least some people who claimed that the clothes were eaten off their backs. Then the locusts came into the houses through cracks and crannies and ate blankets, mattresses, curtains, and everything that wasn't in a metal or glass case. Some people went stark raving mad.

According to the 1880 US Entomological Commission report, the Great Plains locust plague "covered a swath equal to the combined areas of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont." But it was here in the Midwest. Though a similar plague the next year was estimated to be 1,800 miles long and 110 miles wide, the 1874 plague was far bigger and was estimated to be 2 million square miles of nothing but

locusts. The excrement they left behind turned ponds and streams completely undrinkable. And millions of miles looked like it had been totally ravaged by a fire. Trees that hadn't been completely demolished were nothing but white skeletons. Leslie Allen points out that even smaller locust plagues are devastating. He said,

A swarm can devour in one day what 40,000 people eat in one year. In a 1958 visitation Ethiopia lost 167,000 metric tons of grain, enough to feed more than a million people for a year.¹

All of that was wiped out in days. So even though we may not be used to seeing locust plagues, and though we may not think of locust swarms as being any big deal, I want you to understand that locust plagues were a big deal. They were scary.

II. Overview of Joel

A. *The first locust plague of Joel (1:1-20)*

From what we hear in the book of Joel, it sounds like a similar plague had hit Joel's country of Judah. It was one of the worst plagues in the history of that nation - which is saying a lot. Now, there is huge debate on the dating of Joel, with conservatives placing it as early as 870 BC and as late as 400 BC (that's a 470 year spread).² I have several reasons for thinking that Joel was a post-exilic prophet. For example, chapter 3:2 seems to put the Babylonian exile in the past tense. But as Calvin pointed out, the dating of the book does not hugely impact the interpretation of the book.

In any case, let's look at the first locust plague, which is described in chapter 1. Beginning to read at verse 1:

Joel 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. 2 Hear this, you elders, And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers?

He addresses the elders first, because if they model repentance and call for repentance, maybe others will follow. Elders must be on the forefront of repentance. He tells these elders,

1 Leslie C. Allen, "Joel," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 780.

2 The following dates have been proposed: 1) K.A. Credner, Ewald, Pusey, Keil, and von Orelli favor a date between 870 and 860. 2) Floyd Nolan Jones argues for 820, in the reign of Amaziah. 3) Leon Morris argues for somewhere between 810-790, early in the reign of King Uzziah. 4) Patterson, Gaebelein, and J. D. Douglas date it to the mid-700s. 5) Carl A. Keller dates it to between 630 and 600. 6) Kapelrud dates it to 600 BC during the time of Zedekiah. 7) Wilhelm Rudolph dates it to between 597-587. 8) Jacob Myers dates it to 530 BC. Gosta W. Ahlstrom dates it to between 515-500. 9) Most modern scholars date it to the postexilic period. This includes P.P. Jenson, R.K. Harrison, Willem Van Gemeren, Raymond B. Dillard, Tremper Longman III, and many others, including possibly Calvin (see Calvin's comments on Joel 3:10 as a deliberate inversion of Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3).

3 Tell your children about it, Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation. 4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

The elders were supposed to preach on current events and give a biblical exposition of what is happening. In this case, they were called to not attribute these locusts to chance. God was involved. In fact, later the insects will be called God's army. Joel is interpreting God's providences and encouraging the elders to do the same.

And interestingly, he mentions four kinds of locusts here. You can sometimes tell a lot about a culture by the number of words they use for various things. For example, the Hawaiians have thirteen words for the various kinds of lava because of how much volcanoes and lava are a part of their lives. The Yup'ik Eskimo language has fifteen different words for snow, and other Eskimo languages have twelve words for different kinds of snow. Why? Because snow is such a part of their life that they need to be able to have these ways of distinguishing the kinds of snow. In the same way, the Hebrew language has nine words for locust. Joel 1:4 uses four of those nine words. That indicates that they thought about locusts a lot.

And what was the reason for this insect plague? You don't have any mention of idols or other gross sins. No matter which era you place this in, commentators point out that it could not have been an era of great apostasy. This discipline from the Lord came during a time when most Jews at least nominally claimed to be believers and followers of the Lord. They were used to going to church. But the people had been taking God's mercies and blessings for granted and began to little by little be insensitive to the Holy Spirit. So the Lord says, "OK, I guess I will take the blessings away for a bit." In any case, it is interesting that the only sin called out by God in this chapter is the sin of drunkenness. Verse 5:

Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, Because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.

And then he goes on to liken this locust swarm to an army of soldiers:

6 For a nation has come up against My land, Strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, And he has the fangs of a fierce lion. 7 He has laid waste My vine, And ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white.

Why? Because all of the bark has been chewed off of the branches. Verse 8:

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the husband of her youth. 9 The grain offering and the drink offering Have been cut off from the house of the LORD; The priests mourn, who minister to the LORD. 10 The field is wasted, The land mourns; For the grain is ruined, The new wine is dried up, The oil fails. 11 Be ashamed, you farmers,

Wail, you vinedressers, For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the field has perished. 12 The vine has dried up, And the fig tree has withered; The pomegranate tree, The palm tree also, And the apple tree— All the trees of the field are withered; Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. 13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sackcloth, You who minister to my God;

Have you ever prayed and wept all night long? He calls these priests to do so. Why? He says,

For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God. 14 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 LORD. 15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Everyone in that nation was devastatingly impacted.

Let me make a theological point related to eschatology. This is the first of five mentions of the “Day of the Lord” in Joel. Premillennialists tend to treat most “Day of the Lord” references as if they have to refer to the last day of history. That is simply not the case. Here is one that even they will admit is past history. There are many days of the Lord because there are many days of judgment in history. And the devastation of these locusts was so huge it was called the day of the Lord. It was a day of judgment that warranted the church to be gathering in a solemn assembly, and weeping over their sins, and beseeching God for mercy.

Is the modern church willing to do that? The Pilgrims and the Puritans did this routinely. They saw God’s hand in mildew, sickness, forest fires, insect infestations, famine, and other things. We moderns tend to do the opposite. We petition the government to fix the problem rather than calling for repentance. We look for scientific explanations rather than calling upon the Lord. Joel is a book that rebukes the practical Deism of the modern church and calls us to interpret all of life (yes, even insects) through Biblical eyes. Verses 16 and following continue to describe the devastation that had happened.

16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes, Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

17 The seed shrivels under the clods, Storehouses are in shambles; Barns are broken down, For the grain has withered. 18 How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, Because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

He mentions the sheep suffering. It may have been just like in the Great Plains Locust Plague where the wool was eaten off the backs of sheep. Verse 19:

19 O LORD, to You I cry out; For fire has devoured the open pastures, And a flame has burned all the trees of the field.

Commentators are divided on whether this was an additional complication -

a fire that swept through, or whether this is describing the aftermath of the locust plague that looked like a forest fire had gone through. The first picture on your outline looks like a forest fire has gone through the land, doesn't it? But that was just a locust plague. But locusts sound like crackling fire and they produce a result much like fire. But either way you interpret it, verse 20 continues in the same vein:

20 The beasts of the field also cry out to You, For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the open pastures.

Does it seem strange that such judgment would be inflicted upon Judah when the people were at least outwardly upright? Certainly one sin is mentioned (drunkenness), but commentators are puzzled that in general Joel is silent about the sins that called for this judgment. Maybe those sins were obvious enough. But it is more likely that the Holy Spirit was already convicting people of their hidden sins, and there was no need for Joel to be specific.

Joel's call seems to be a call to self-examination and repentance any time we experience a manifestation of God's Deuteronomy 28 disciplines. If those Deuteronomy 28 problems only affect us individually, it is an individual repentance. If they affect the family, it is a family repentance. If they affect the whole community, it is a call for community repentance. And that repentance can turn away the devastation. That is the point.

Deuteronomy 28 says that when God's people begin to forget God and take Him for granted, He is very creative in the problems He can start bringing into their lives. Yes, he mentions locusts two times in Deuteronomy 28 (vv. 38,42), but he also mentions your bread batches consistently going bad (v. 17), losing cattle (v. 18), fevers (v. 22), mildew (v. 22), lack of rain (vv. 23-24), itchy skin (v. 27), worms infesting your fruit (v. 39), prolonged illness (v. 59), and many other problems. Modern Christians are skeptical that their problems have anything to do with sin or discipline. Rarely do their troubles lead them to cry out to God in repentance. They are too scientific sophisticated to take the Bible seriously. But there ought to be calls for solemn assemblies of repentance and crying out to God when we experience disasters in our own day.

If Joel were present today, he would call California to solemn assemblies of repentance because of the constant fires. Or the 2018 mudslides in California that injured so many. Or Hurricane Maria in 2017 that produced 90 billion dollars worth of damage. Or Hurricane Harvey in the same year that produced an estimated 125 billion worth of damage. Or Hurricane Irma in the same year that produced 53.5 billion worth of damage. Joel is a book that

calls us to quit thinking like Americans and begin realizing that God is constantly at work in disciplining nations.

B. The second locust plague of Joel 2:1-20

But there is another catastrophe mentioned in the first part of Joel chapter 2. There is debate on whether verses 1-11 is simply a prophetic warning of another future locust plague that Joel predicted at a later time (which is the way I tentatively take it), or whether the locusts are being used to describe a future invasion of Judah by human armies. There are good people on both sides of that question.

Of those who see this section as describing a locust-like army of men, there is a wide variety of interpretation. Some see it as an imminent invasion by the Assyrian armies. Obviously they have to date the book way early. Others see it as the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. They date the book to the late pre-exilic period. Or, if you hold that this was a post-exilic prophet (as the majority of evangelical scholars today tend to do), then the only imminent possibility for a human army of this magnitude would be Esther's battle of Gog and Magog that we have looked at before - when it looked like every Jew would be annihilated.

And the clues in the book are not absolutely definitive. While verse 20 could possibly be describing the massive number of human bodies that fell in Israel during that last battle, they could just as easily describe the incredible stench of rotting locusts. Look at verse 20:

But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things.

I take it as simply being billions of dead locusts that are rotting and creating a stench. Others take it as human bodies littering the ground and creating a stench. But either way you take it, whether a human army or another locust army, Joel shows that God's hand of discipline is involved - that's the key point. Let's read verses 1-11:

Joel 2:1 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: Notice that this is not 1000s of years in the future. The day of the Lord in chapter 1 was past tense. This day of the LORD is at hand; it's about to happen in Joel's day. So it is a second day of the Lord that is in his imminent future, but in our distant past. Verse 2:

2 A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains.

That sure looks like a massive cloud of locusts to me - so many that it blots out the sun. The second part of verse 2 likens these locusts to an army:

A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations. 3 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 desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them.

Again, that sure sounds like locusts. And so does the description of their looks and their sounds in verses 4 and following:

4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run. 5 With a noise like chariots Over mountaintops they leap, Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, Like a strong people set in battle array. 6 Before them the people writhe in pain; All faces are drained of color. 7 They run like mighty men,

Notice all the way through that it doesn't say that they are a fire, are chariots, are strong people, or that they are mighty men. It says that they make a noise like chariots, like fire, and are like a strong people, and run like mighty men. That is one of several indicators that make me think that this is a locust army being likened to a human army rather than a human army being likened to a locust plague. Continuing in verse 4.

They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks. 8 They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down. 9 They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief. 10 The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. 11 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?

Whether locusts or human army, God's call is the same. Gather together, humble yourselves, repent, and trust God's compassion is sufficient to deal with the problem. We must be more like the Pilgrims in our interpretation of providence and less like the modern skeptic. Verse 12:

Joel 2:12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." 13 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. 14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him— A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; 16 Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. 17 Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "

In verses 21-27 a time of incredible peace and prosperity is promised to happen after the second locust plague and after repentance. That too fits the

time of the post-exilic community by far the best. And if you look at verses 25-26, you can see why I lean in the direction of chapter two's army being literal locusts as well. Verse 25:

25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

See? He interprets everything that had gone before as being literal locusts that were likened to a human army (not the other way around). Verse 26:

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

This instructs us that we should humbly entreat God any time we experience planet earth not blessing us. That should be an anomaly for a Christian. It can happen (as it happened to Job) but our first reaction when things don't go well should be to cry out to God and ask, "Lord, is there something in my life that you are not pleased with?" Though Job shows that there can be exceptions, God's general purpose is John's prayer in 3 John 2 - that you would prosper in all things and be in health even as your soul prospers. God makes all of creation to serve His people.

C. AD 30-70 (2:28-32)

In any case, in verses 28 and following we come to the famous passage that was fulfilled in Acts 2. Verse 28 begins by saying, "And it shall come to pass afterward..." And Acts 2 interprets that "afterward" as being in the "last days" of Israel. On KayserCommentary.com I have a detailed chart with timeline and Scripture proofs that shows that the last days started with the exile of the Jews in Babylon and went all the way up to AD 70.³ The numerous "last days" verses that point to times before Christ's birth show that the last days didn't start with Christ's birth, or with Christ's death, or even AD 70. They started with the exile in Babylon and continued to AD 70. And so it is natural that the rest of Joel 2 takes us all the way up to AD 70. And it does. You will recognize the words of verses 28-29 as Pentecost in AD 30:

28 "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. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

After Pentecost what happens? More and more signs and wonders begin to happen before another historical Day of the Lord in AD 70. All five references to the day of the Lord in Joel refer to judgments in history, not to the last day of history. Look at verses 30-31.

3 <https://kaysercommentary.com/Blogs/Last%20Days%20BeginBC.md>

30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

If those signs and wonders came after Pentecost but also immediately preceded the Day of the Lord, they correspond to the signs and wonders we looked at in the first part of Revelation. And there were many signs and wonders in the years leading up to AD 70. But the very fact that Peter quotes every verse through to the end of chapter 2 and interprets every one of those verses as referring to the last days of Israel, shows that we cannot put a 2000 year gap between verse 29 and 30 - as so many people do. These numerous unwarranted 2000 year gaps should show us that there is something seriously wrong with their system.

But I want you to notice that in addition to the first century tribulation that made men’s hearts fail them for fear of what was coming upon the earth, the gospel message also goes forth. So verse 32 says,

And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

It was only a remnant of Jews who were saved in those last days of Israel. But God, true to His Word, did indeed keep saving them. And even after most of the church was killed off under Nero, God saved another 144,000 Jews - 12,000 out of every tribe of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8).⁴ So there is both Gospel and judgment in the last verses of chapter 2.

D. The AD 70 replacement of the earthly Jerusalem with the heavenly, the cleansing of heaven, and the beginning of the new creation (3:1-21)

Chapter 3 is the last section of the book. It’s first words, “For behold, in those days and at that time” make it clear that we still aren’t thousands of years into the future. Since Acts 2 quotes Joel 2:28-32 as all being first century, then “in those days and at that time” means that chapter 3 must begin in the first century AD as well.

Now, there are two ways of taking the first verse. The New King James, NIV, and ESV all give the captivity a positive spin - as if it is ended. So the New King James translates it, “When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem.” The problem is, the word “captives” does not appear in the Hebrew. Instead, it says, “I will bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.” It is the captivity being brought back. Or as the King James renders it, “I will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.” The

4 For a detailed analysis of Revelation, see <https://revelation.biblicalblueprints.org/home>

NIV and ESV are even looser when they paraphrase it, "I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." There is no word "fortunes" in the Hebrew. It is another "captivity." This implies that there was a captivity before Joel and another captivity after Joel. And this fits with verses 2-3 that speaks about people being scattered among the nations.

So the literal Hebrew in verse 1 predicts another captivity. Then in verses 2-16 God brings a major judgment upon all nations. This section has nothing to do with peace. It is empire wide war and destruction - wars and rumors of wars. In fact, verse 10 reverses the language of Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3. Those two passages had promised that much later in the Messianic kingdom there would be no more war and swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. But where Isaiah and Micah show what will happen much later in the Messianic kingdom, Joel shows what will happen at the beginning of the Messianic kingdom. At the beginning of the kingdom there will be no peace. So verse 10 reverses the language of Isaiah and Micah by saying, "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears." Every energy would be placed into this massive warfare. And as we saw in the book of Revelation, every nation throughout the entire Roman empire would have massive loss of life and would be involved in this empire-wide war that destroyed Israel and that destroyed the empire of Rome for at least a few years. Tacitus speaks of the empire dying. All nations were at war. Verse 14 speaks of

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!" For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

But the next verse picks up on language that Jesus used repeatedly to prophesy an imminent lights out for Israel - "The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness." This of course literally happened, but the literal historical event was a symbol of lights going out for earthly Jerusalem.

And from this point on, it is the heavenly Jerusalem that is the only Jerusalem that counts. The spiritual significance of the earthly Jerusalem is done away with. Verse 16:

16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

We saw in our Revelation series that God was indeed a shelter for a literal remnant of Israel - exactly 144,000 who were spared the Great Wrath of the Day of the Lord and who survived in Pella. This also marks the time when Satan is cast out of heaven (Revelation 12) and no demons ever have access to it again. Verse 17:

17 “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again.” Where does God dwell now? Not in the earthly Jerusalem. He dwells in the heavenly Zion or the heavenly Jerusalem. And Revelation says that in that first century war against the earthly Jerusalem that had become Sodom and Egypt there was also war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against Satan and his angels, and all demons were cast out of heaven, never again to accuse the brethren before the throne of God as they had been doing (as for example in Job 1-2). Heaven was purified. In fact, the word alien simply means illegitimate or one who didn’t belong. That certainly describes demons.

But with heaven purified, the streams from heaven will bring increasing purification to the earth. And Joel refers to the prophecies of millennial peace that Isaiah and Micah had predicted. The wars that characterize the beginning eras of the Millennium will eventually be replaced with the peace and prosperity of the later portions of Christ’s kingdom. Verse 18 refers to that trajectory predicted in Isaiah, saying,

18 And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias. The house of the Lord is now in heaven, and the streams of blessing that flow out of heaven are destined to fill the earth and to bless the earth. It’s the kingdom of heaven invading earth and blessing the earth. All he has to do to bring these images to our minds is quote from Isaiah and Micah in this one verse, and the rest falls in place. It is this spiritual Israel and this heavenly Jerusalem that will abide forever.

And spiritual Egypt and spiritual Jerusalem stand in antithesis from this time and throughout eternity as the last three verses indicate. One is forever cursed and the other is forever blessed. That my friends, is the message of Joel.