

## The Book of Joel – Introduction

The Book of Joel may be brief—only three chapters—but its message is weighty, far-reaching, and essential for understanding both Israel’s story and God’s larger purposes for the world. Joel speaks into a moment of national crisis, and yet his words reach far beyond his own generation. This small book introduces themes that echo through the rest of Scripture, including the sweeping phrase “*the Day of the Lord*.”

### A Quick Historical Orientation

After Solomon’s death, Israel fractured into two kingdoms:

- The Northern Kingdom, most often called *Israel*
- The Southern Kingdom, called *Judah*

Joel’s ministry focuses primarily on Judah, the southern kingdom centered in Jerusalem, and he speaks at a time when the temple service is still functioning.

Scholars generally date Joel early—likely around 835–805 BC, during or just before the early years of King Joash. This timing makes sense for several reasons:

- No king is mentioned, which aligns with the period when Athaliah reigned violently in Judah and young Joash was hidden in the temple (2 Kings 11).
- Joel mentions temple worship frequently, meaning it was still active.
- He never references Assyria or Babylon, suggesting his ministry predates their invasions.

Joel is likely among the earliest writing prophets, probably contemporary with Elisha, and his brief book contains one of the most sweeping prophetic visions in all of Scripture.

### Why Joel Matters Today

Joel is often overlooked, but it is foundational for several reasons:

1. He introduces the biblical concept of “the Day of the Lord.”  
Later prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and others—build on the framework Joel provides.
2. He reveals God’s sovereignty over nations and natural events.  
Nothing takes place—locust plagues, political upheavals, global crises—outside God’s oversight.
3. He emphasizes God’s readiness to respond to true repentance.  
This is as relevant now as it was then.
4. He speaks not only to Israel’s history but to the destiny of all nations.