

1. Joel opened his message with an appeal to all who were living in the land, headed by the elders, to consider the disaster which had come on them. (Joel 1:1-3)
2. The elders were civil leaders who played a prominent part in the governmental and judicial systems.
3. Nothing in the experience of Joel's generation or that of their ancestors was able to match the magnitude of this recent locust plague - and this unique event would be spoken of throughout coming generations.
4. The elders agreed with the prophet that the nation faced a catastrophe of monumental proportion such as they had never seen before.
5. It was something people would tell to their children and grandchildren for years to come.
6. The words in verse 4 speak of successive swarms of locusts invading the land, each swarm destroying what the others had left behind.
7. A swarm of locusts (adult - 6cm/2.34 in) can devastate the vegetation of a countryside with amazing speed and thoroughness, and nothing can stop them.

Note: A high-density swarm (>50 insects per m²) of desert plague locusts covering 2 km² will contain approximately one billion insects.
Each locust can eat its weight in plants each day, so a swarm of such size would eat 423 million pounds of plants every day.

8. Joel 1:5-7. Except for pointing out the insincerity of some of the worshipers (2:12-13), drunkenness is the only sin that Joel actually names in the book.
9. This was a serious sin that the prophets often condemned. Joel saw the locusts as a literal wake-up call. (Hosea 7:5; Amos 4:1).
10. These people had good reason to weep because there was no wine and wouldn't be any more until the next season, if there was a next season.
11. They attacked the vines and the fig trees, two things essential to Jewish life. Having one's own vineyard and fig trees was a symbol of success and contentment in the East.
12. Joel 1:8-12. Joel named some of the crops that had been ruined: the grain (wheat and barley), the new wine, the oil, and the fruit from the pomegranate, palm, and apple trees.
13. From season to season, the locusts ate whatever was produced, and the drought kept the soil from producing anything more.
14. Along with the harvest, the joy of the people had also dried up.

15. In verses 18–20, Joel includes the flocks and herds and their pastures. All that the farmers could do was express their grief and lament. It seemed a hopeless situation.
16. Joel 1:13-18. Not only were the people in need, but so was the temple. Nobody could bring the proper sacrifices because no meal, wine, or animals were available.
17. Joel called on the priests to lament and pray. The Jews were required to observe only one fast, and that was on the annual Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:29, 31)
18. They were to remove the white garments of the priesthood in favor of the black, coarse sackcloth and reduce themselves to wailing instead of singing and to a time of mourning.
19. Notice the phrase in verse 13 concerning the priests - “you who minister before my God.” This is a reminder to them of their duty to bring the needs of the people (including himself) before God.
20. Then notice the phrase concerning the temple - “the house of your God.” Joel also reminded the priests of their special relationship to temple worship.
21. The religious leaders could call a fast whenever the people faced an emergency and needed to humble themselves and seek God’s face.
22. In verse 15 we notice the phrase “the day of the LORD.” The immediate reference here is to the assault of the locusts and the devastating effects of the drought.
23. Joel will also use the phrase in chapter 2:1-11 to describe the terrible “day of the LORD” when the nations will be judged.
24. Joel devoted the last two verses (19-20) of this chapter to the suffering that the locusts and the drought had brought upon animals and the land.
25. Joel didn’t ask God for anything; he simply told the Lord of the suffering of the land, the beasts, and the people, knowing that God would do what was right.
26. He is the “Lord of hosts,” the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth. He is “the Almighty” and none can stay His powerful hand.