

Joel—Inductive Bible Study for Youth

- Inductive Bible study means that we read the Bible and try to figure out what is there, as opposed to having an idea and looking for verses to support it. In any inductive study, it is important to get the whole idea and general context. Let's begin by reading through the whole book quickly and trying to outline the main topics and ideas. What do you come up with?
- It is common in the prophets that the prophet sees something near at hand and something far in the future almost at the same time. The prophet does not usually tell you that he is shifting into a distant future time or back to a present or near future time. What evidences of this do you see in your first reading of Joel? (Keep this idea in mind as you study.)
- The name Joel means "Jehovah is his God." There were six other Joels mentioned in the Bible, from the time of Samuel through the times of the kings. However, the Joel who wrote this book is not identified as any of those. He was not a famous person, yet he had a part in God's plan to write one of the books of the Bible. We know him only from his book of prophecy. Is there something about your life that will live beyond you? Have you thought about what God wants you to accomplish with your life? What do you think it might be?

Joel 1:1

- What came to Joel? Has the Word of God come to you? How?
- What do we know about Joel's family?
- When we read the word "that", (the Word of the Lord *that* came to Joel), we realize that what follows will be the actual word God sent to him. Will you take time now and ask God to speak to you, too?

1:2

- Whom does Joel call upon to listen? Give two groups of people.
- It is believed that Joel lived in Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. (Judah and Jerusalem are mentioned several times—2:1, for instance.) If so, to whom is he talking

in this verse?

- Some of the minor prophets are addressed to other nations—for example, Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah. Yet Joel is addressed to the Jews—the people God chose to give His Word the Bible to the world and to bring the Saviour into the world. Think about the fact that God addressed both Israel and other nations in His Word. What does this say to you about God?
- In verse 2, the prophet begins to talk about some event. What do we know about it just from this verse alone?
- What unusual events have happened in the history of your own land?

1:3

- How did God desire knowledge about this event to be passed down?
- When we tell our children about God's working in our lives, we enable that knowledge to be passed down to future generations. If we neglect to teach our own children, how will that affect future generations of our family?

1:4

- What insect is depicted in verse 4? What is this insect (or what are these insects) doing?
- What are they destroying? Why is this important?
- Some Bible interpreters think Joel is talking about a hoard of insects that will invade the land as a warning of God's judgment. Others think the prophet uses insects as figure of speech to warn people of a greater coming judgment by invading armies (a nation coming against them in mentioned in verse 6). Others think both interpretations are true. If both are true, how would that work?
- Joel is believed to have written his prophecy about 200 years before the date that Jerusalem was destroyed. How could his prophecy have been warning his people of coming judgment?

1:5

- Who is called upon to wake up?
- What should they do once they wake up?
- Why should they cry?
- How is the thought of this verse connected to the thought of the verse that preceded it?
- Why has new wine been cut off from the mouth?

1:6

- Here the prophet speaks of a nation coming against His land, Israel. Does God lead Joel to use the past, present, or future tense of the verb?
- The event was still future, so why do you think God led Joel to speak of it as if it were already past?
- What does this tell us about the way God views human history?
- What do we know about the nation that will come against Israel?
- How does this relate to the insects we read of in verse 4?
- This verse mentions “his teeth” as if he were a single man, even though the prophet has already said that the nation is numerous or will have numerous soldiers. They will be like the teeth of what animal?
- What does a lion do with its teeth? (A lion is a carnivore—a meat eater. Its teeth enable it to tear raw flesh apart and eat it.)
- What does this say about what will happen to Israel?

1:7

- To whom is the “he” of verse 7 referring?

- What tense are the verbs? (Past tense, yet looking back we can see that it is still about 200 years before these events will happen. God is speaking of future events as though they had already happened.)
- What have these invading armies destroyed (What will they destroy)?
- What plant is used here to symbolize Israel?
- To whom does this plant belong?
- How is this a warning to the people of Israel?

1:8

- What is the appropriate response to this event?
- Would we normally expect a bride to be mourning? Why is she mourning in this verse?
- What does the imagery of the bride symbolize? What were the listeners in Joel's time supposed to understand from this?

1:9

- When the enemies destroy all their crops, how will this affect their worship of God?
- Who is mourning in verse 9, and why?
- When we think about calamities like a crop failure or the destruction of a crop, is our response purely based on how it will affect our own comfort? Do we also think about how it affects the work of God?
- When we pray about such things, do we keep in mind God's honor & His plan?

1:10

- What mourns in verse 10?
- Why?

- Can you name some time when things seemed so bad that you felt even the rocks or the ground should cry out against it? Can you think of some such times in the history of your land or other African countries?

1:11

- In addition to the land itself mourning, what groups of people are called upon to mourn? Why?
- What has happened to their crops?
- Remembering that their crops were their source of living, what does this mean for them?

1:12

- What is the difference between annual crops and grapevines? Trees?
- What has happened even to the vines and trees?
- What also has withered away? Why?

1:13

- Who is called upon to lament (cry or grieve) in this verse?
- How are they to express their sorrow?
- Why are they to grieve?
- What other verse or verses already expressed this thought?

1:14

- What are they counseled to do because of the judgment they are facing?
- Who is to gather in the house of the Lord?
- What are they to do there?

1:15

- What is at hand?
- What kind of a day is the day of the Lord?
- What will the day of the Lord bring from the Almighty?
- It appears they were facing imminent judgment, and they failed to recognize it. In truth, do any of us know whether we might be meeting the Lord within the next minute even? Why?

1:16

- The food was not cut off before they could see it, but before their eyes. What is the significance of this?
- What else has been cut off?
- This cutting off of joy has even reached to where?

1:17

- This verse gives us very powerful images. What is the first image? Try to imagine it in your mind.
- What could cause such a thing?
- What is broken down? Why?
- Together, what do these images show us?

1:18

- Besides people, what else groans? Why?
- What else is punished for the people's sin?
- Have you ever thought about the consequences your sin may bring to others? Can you think of some examples of this kind of thing?

1:19

- Why is the prophet crying out?
- What effect will this have on the people?
- This prophet is just full of bad news. But is there really any good news when we have broken God's law?

1:20

- What other group of animals cries out to God because of the judgment?
- How is this group different from the animals spoken of in verse 18?
- What two things are they missing that are necessary for survival?
- The consequences of sin are far-reaching and devastating. What were the consequences of Adam's sin, and how does it remind you of what we have read in Joel chapter 1? (See Genesis 3:17-19)

2:1-2

- What in these verses gives you a clue that the prophet is now going beyond the present impending catastrophe and is beginning to look into the far future?
- Why are they called upon to blow the trumpet?
- Is the trumpet to be blown in the world or amongst God's people?
- Why should the inhabitants of the land tremble?
- From God's viewpoint, was the day of the Lord's judgment near or far away?
- How is this time described?
- Who will come, great and strong, against God's people?
- Remember that in chapter 1, there was an immediate invader who was numerous. Compare the invader in chapter 1 with the invader described here. The first was a kind of small picture and warning from God of the greater invader who was to come.

2:3

- To what is the invading army compared?
- What change takes place in the land as they invade?
- What can escape them?
- How complete is the devastation they bring?
- What is the worst devastation you have heard of? How does that compare to the devastation described here?

2:4

- To what animal are the invaders compared?
- What do they run like?
- What quality of this animal is being compared to the invaders?

2:5

- What other qualities of the invading army are seen here?
- Will it be possible to stand up against this army?
- What comparison in this verse lets you know that the destruction is complete?

2:6

- How are the people described upon whom the invaders are preying?
- What are the people feeling?

2:7

- How does the invader work together?
- Why is this important?

2:8

- What further description is given of the invading army?
- Why are they not cut down?

2:9

- What three places are the invaders found?
- How much protection do the shut doors of their homes provide?
- What do you think is being emphasized in this verse?

2:10

- What effect does the invading army have on the earth?
- What effect do they have on the sun and moon?
- On the stars?
- Remember that this describes first of all the invading army of locusts in their present or near future, and secondly the future army that will invade Israel in the end times.

2:11

- So far we have mostly been looking at the invading armies of the enemy. What change do we see in this verse?
- How is the Lord's army described?
- How is the day of the Lord described?
- Is the day of the Lord a time of blessing and reward or of judgment and punishment?

2:12

- We have already seen that in God's foreknowledge, judgment is already inevitable (it will surely happen). Yet even at this very late date, what gracious invitation does God give them?
- What kind of turning to God is required in order to keep away God's judgment?

- What are some of the proper or expected expressions of such a turning?

2:13

- How does God show them that He requires more than an outward turning back to Him?
- To whom must they return?
- What qualities of His character are they called on to remember?

2:14

- What hope does the prophet hold out based on God's character if there is real repentance?
- How would such a blessing affect the worship of God?

2:15

- Based on these warnings and this hope, what are the people advised to do?
- What should the blowing of the trumpet announce?
- What would be the purpose of this assembly and this fast?

2:16

- Which of the people should gather together?
- What range of ages should be included? Why?
- Who should come whom one might not expect to do so? Why?
- Has your nation faced a time when all the people needed to unite to plead for God's mercy? When? Should you consider calling such a time now? Why?

2:17

- What were the priests (the religious leaders) admonished to do? Why?
- What should their prayer be?

- If judgment came on God's people, how would this bring reproach on the name of God?
- When you are in trouble, do you consider only how you can personally get out of trouble or escape punishment? Or do you also consider the effect of what is happening on the name of God and on His purposes for the world?

2:18

- What is the intended result of this fast, this calling on God?

2:19

- What would it be like if God answered in the positive or affirmative? What would happen then?
- How would this result both meet their needs and glorify God?

2:20

- If God's response is positive, what would He do to the invading army?
- What would become of that army?
- Why would that ill fate come upon them?

2:21

- Why does the land not need to fear?
- Rather than fear, what should a proper response be, and why?

2:22

- Even the beasts of the field have no need for fear. Why?
- Rather than the devastation pictured earlier, what picture is given here of plant life?

2:23

- What reason do the people have to rejoice?

- What has been the evidence of God's faithfulness to them?
- Who is the ultimate source of rain on earth? Think about this. Why is this so?
- Since God is the ultimate source of rain, is it ever right to go to other spirits to make it rain or to ensure good crops? Why not? What should we do instead?

2:24

- When God blesses in this way, what will be the result?

2:25

- What will God restore to them?
- How do you think He could do this?
- Has the enemy eaten up some years or some months of your life? Would you turn back to God so that He could restore those years?

2:26

- What will be the end result of this restoration?
- Who deserves the praise when we have enough to eat? Why?
- What is the problem when God's people are put to shame?

2:27

- What will God's people know when this restoration takes place?
- How many other gods are there besides the Lord?
- We know, of course, that people claim there are many gods. Why do these other gods not deserve to be called God? What do you think?
- What phrase is repeated from vs. 26? Why do you think it is repeated?

2:28

- What other amazing thing will happen following this time of restoration?
- What will be the result of God's Spirit being poured out on His people?

2:29

- On whom else will God pour out His Spirit?
- Who are God's menservants and maidservants?
- What does the title "servant" imply about their relationship to God?

2:30

- What will God show in the heavens and in the earth at that time?
- How will some of these wonders be seen?
- Have you ever seen God do something that you considered a "wonder"? When?

2:31

- What will happen to the appearance of the sun and moon before the day of the Lord?
- What is unusual about the sun being turned to darkness? Can you think of another time when this happened for a few hours in midday? (See Matthew 27:45-56. What was happening at that time?)
- The phrase "the day of the Lord" always refers specifically to end times. What other clues have you already seen that hint that much of this passage refers to end times?
- What adjectives (describing words) are used to describe the day of the Lord?

2:32

- The prophet is describing fearful times, but what good news is still there?
- What do people need to do in order to be saved?
- Have you called on the name of the Lord and asked Him to save you? Do you remember when? Can you tell the group about it?

- If you are not sure you have done that, why not do so right now?
- Where would deliverance come from? Do you remember many years later what happened on Mt. Zion? (See Matthew 27:32-35).
- What are some of the important themes you have seen in this chapter?
- How is this chapter like chapter 1, and how is it different?

3:1-2

- What specific time has the prophet been writing about?
- What will be the condition of Judah and Jerusalem prior to these events?
- At the time of Joel's writing, Judah and Jerusalem were not yet captives. How do we know Joel is seeing things far into the future?
- We often feel anxious about the future, for we do not know what a single hour will bring forth. How does it make you feel to realize that the future never takes God by surprise?
- When God brings back Judah and Jerusalem, whom else will He gather?
- Where will God gather them?
- God will judge them concerning what particular issue?
- Why will God judge nations over how they treated Israel? What is so special about Israel?

3:3

- How have the nations treated Israel?
- What is especially offensive to God about how they have treated them?
- When people sell or exchange or use children for personal gain, this is called child trafficking. What are the most common ways it happens in your country? What is God's feeling about it?

3:4

- What other people groups join in the attack against Jerusalem?
- They are joining an attack against Jerusalem, but against whom are they really retaliating?

- Who is the “Me” who is speaking in this verse?
- What will God do to those who retaliate against God?
- The word “retaliate” carries the idea of getting even for a supposed wrong by inflicting pain or punishment on someone. Why would these nations possibly be angry with God or with Israel?
- Have you ever felt angry with God? When and why?
- When we get angry at God, we are implying that we know better than He does what is right. What is wrong with that?

3:5

- What did the invading armies do with the silver and gold of the temple?
- Besides the fact that they were stealing, what was especially horrible about their use of these precious metals?
- To whom did the silver and gold of the temple really belong? Why?

3:6

- What did they do to the people of Judah and Jerusalem?
- Why? What was their goal?

3:7

- What good thing will God do with the people of Judah someday?
- What painful thing will He do to their captors?

3:8

- What will then happen to the sons and daughters of the invading army?
- Who has prophesied these events?

3:9

- What was God’s call to the nations at that particular time?
- What should be their first step in preparing for war?

3:10

- How should they prepare for war as far as weaponry was concerned?
- What is the difference between peacetime use of tools and wartime use of tools?
- How would even the weak be used in time of war?

3:11

- We know that God was not pleased that the nations gather against Jerusalem, so what is the tone of the command in this verse? (Mocking—go ahead and do it, since you are determined to do so. See what it gets you.)

3:12

- When the nations gather to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, they think they are gathering there to defeat Israel, but what will really happen to them there?
- Who is it who will judge the nations?

3:13

- The next verse uses imagery of harvest. To whom is God speaking? Who will do the reaping? (Compare Matthew 13:39-43)
- What signals that this particular harvest is ripe? Do you recall a time when the Apostle Paul also used the imagery of harvest in connection with judgment on sin? (Compare Galatians 6:7)

3:14

- How many are in the Valley of Decision? If this is the same valley referred to in 3:12, why do you think it is called the Valley of Decision?
- What time is near in that valley?

3:15

- What normally bright lights will be darkened?
- Where have we seen this idea before? (Compare Joel 2:2 and 2:10.)

3:16

- As many nations surround and besiege Jerusalem, whom will they hear?
- What will happen to the earth when He speaks?
- The Lord will be a terror to those attacking Jerusalem, but what will He be to His people? What do these two names mean to you?

3:17

- What will they know or understand at that point about the Lord?
- What will they understand about Jerusalem?
- What does it mean that strangers will pass through her (Jerusalem) no more?

3:18

- How is the land of Israel pictured at that time?
- How was that picture in contrast to the immediate catastrophe they were facing? (Think back to the immediate context of Joel given in chapter 1.)

3:19

- What kind of a price will Egypt and Edom pay for their violent attacks against the people of Judah?
3:20
- Why is this punishment just?

3:20

- Many have tried and will try to destroy Jerusalem, but according to God's Word, will they ever succeed? Why not?

3:21

- Who would cleanse the blood of Jerusalem?
- Why? What is special about Zion (Jerusalem)?
- Do you pray for God's blessing on Jerusalem and on His ancient people, the Jews? It was they who gave us our Scriptures and our Saviour. Will you begin to pray that they will again turn to

God?

- Thinking back over the book of Joel, what are some of the new truths you have learned?
- What are some principles from this book that are applicable to your own life? How will you begin to apply these principles?
- What questions has this study raised that you'd like to learn more about?
- Is there an area of your life where you're facing something similar to what Israel was facing in the time of Joel? If so, what principles from Joel could apply to your situation?
- This book centers on Israel, a people for whom God has a special regard because He chose them for the challenging tasks of giving His book and His Son to bless the whole world. Because they have blessed us all in these ways, we should also bless them. Will you end your study of the prophet Joel by praying a blessing on Israel?

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