

Message Four

**The Central Thought of the Book of Joel  
with Its Controlling Prophecy of Four Kinds of Locusts**

Scripture Reading: Joel 1:1-4; 2:25-32; 3:11

**I. We need to see the central thought of the book of Joel with its controlling prophecy of four kinds of locusts:**

- A. The name Joel means “Jehovah is God”—1:1.
- B. “Hear this, you elders, / And give heed, all you inhabitants of the land. / Has this ever happened in your days, / Or even in the days of your fathers? / Tell your children about it, / And let your children tell their children, / And let their children tell the next generation. / What the cutting locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; / And what the swarming locust has left, the licking locust has eaten; / And what the licking locust has left, the consuming locust has eaten”—vv. 2-4:
  - 1. Four words are used for *locust* in verse 4, probably referring to one kind of locust in various stages of growth—cf. 2:25.
  - 2. The four stages of this one kind of locust refer to the nations that devastated Israel in four consecutive empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, including Antichrist, who will be the last Caesar of the Roman Empire—Rev. 17:8-11; cf. Dan. 7:12.
  - 3. The armies of these empires were like locusts (Joel 2:25) coming to devastate and consume Israel totally, devouring her people, land, fields, produce, food, and drink and cutting off her offerings.
  - 4. These empires correspond to the four sections of the great human image in Daniel 2:31-33, to the four beasts in Daniel 7:3-8 (cf. Rev. 13:1-2), and to the four horns in Zechariah 1:18-21.
  - 5. They will be overcome and terminated by Christ, who will set up the kingdom and reign among the saved Israel in the age of restoration—Dan. 2:34-35.
- C. Beginning approximately two hundred years before the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, God sent the prophets to warn Israel, to advise them, and to call them to return to God; because Israel did not listen to the prophets, this forced God to send the four kinds of locusts to chastise His people; Israel has been suffering the cutting, swarming, licking, and consuming of the locusts for many centuries:
  - 1. God’s purpose in allowing Israel to suffer under the locusts was to bring forth a couple, Joseph and Mary, so that God could be born in man, of man, and out of man to become no longer only God but a God-man; hence, God used the suffering of the Jews to bring in the incarnation, an unprecedented event that brought God into man and mingled God and man as one.
  - 2. Furthermore, God has used the locusts to afford all the necessary facilities in the environment for the carrying out of His purpose:
    - a. The Roman Empire, the aggregate of the four empires, afforded everything necessary for the incarnated God to live and move and work on earth.
    - b. It also provided the means for Christ to be crucified for the accomplishment of God’s redemption (John 18:31-32), the occasion for the pouring out of the Spirit as the processed and consummated Triune God upon all flesh to produce the church as the organic Body of Christ (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2), and the facilities for the spreading of the gospel to the entire inhabited earth (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

- D. The four empires, or kingdoms, signified by the locusts are worldly, but they are used by God's Craftsman (Christ—Dan. 2:34-35) as His instrument to chastise Israel and punish the nations; in this way God is accomplishing whatever is needed for Christ to be manifested in full so that the entire universe may be fully restored:
1. Christ is the last Craftsman used by God to break the four horns; the four craftsmen are the skills used by God to destroy these kingdoms with their kings; each of the first three kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece) was taken over in a skillful way by the kingdom that followed it—Zech. 1:18-21; Dan. 5; 8:3-7.
  2. Thus, the four craftsmen used by God are Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and ultimately Christ.
  3. The fourth Craftsman will be Christ as the stone cut out without hands, who will crush the restored Roman Empire and thereby crush the great human image as the totality of human government at His coming back—2:31-35.
  4. This stone signifies not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ, Christ with His "mighty ones"—Joel 3:11.

**II. In the Bible and in the Minor Prophets four things are unveiled: God's chastisement on His elect people, God's punishment of the nations, the manifestation of Christ, and the restoration; these four matters are covered in Joel, a short book of three chapters:**

- A. First, God sent the locusts to consume Israel (1:2—2:11, 25); this was God's chastisement because of Israel's great evils.
- B. Then, this book reveals that God will punish and judge the Gentile nations because in their consuming of Israel they are excessive, acting without regard for justice—3:1-16a, 19.
- C. God's chastising of Israel and His punishing of the nations issue in the manifestation of Christ:
  1. Regarding this manifestation, Joel speaks concerning the outpouring of the processed, consummated, compound Spirit, that is, the Spirit of God compounded with Christ's humanity, Christ's death and its effectiveness, and Christ's resurrection with its power (2:28; Exo. 30:25, footnote 1); this is the Holy Spirit, who was poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21), and this Spirit is the consummated Triune God and the realization of Christ for the manifestation of Christ.
  2. This manifestation began with the incarnation of Christ and has been confirmed and strengthened by the outpouring of the Spirit, for through that outpouring the individual Christ became the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13), the church as the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:15-16).
- D. The church as the manifestation of Christ will bring in the glorious day of restoration (Joel 2:25-27), the age of the millennial kingdom (3:16-21), in which Christ will be manifested in a fuller way; the restoration will consummate in the fullest manifestation of Christ in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-2).

**III. We need to have a clear view concerning three matters:**

- A. We are living in an age, the continuation of the preceding ages, in which our God is still moving; He is working among the Jews and by the nations to perform His economy in the building up of the organism of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.
- B. We need to see that today we, the believers in Christ, are in the Body of Christ; we all are members of the Body of Christ, which is the organism of the Triune God; as members of the Body, we should aspire to be the overcomers, the mighty ones (Joel 3:11), who will return with Christ to deal with Antichrist at the battle of Armageddon and who will be Christ's co-kings in the millennium.

- C. Our goal as members of the Body of Christ is to enlarge the manifestation of Christ intrinsically; we desire to see the intrinsic enlargement of the manifestation of Christ in the Spirit of the processed Triune God and by the life of our Father, the eternal, almighty Divine Being.
- IV. We can take the overcoming way to enlarge the manifestation of Christ so that we may become His mighty ones (v. 11) by walking, living, and having our being in and according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4) through the following organic practices:**
- A. Calling on the name of the Lord—Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:12-13.
  - B. Pray-reading His word as the Spirit—Eph. 6:17-18.
  - C. Praying unceasingly—1 Thes. 5:17.
  - D. Not quenching the Spirit but fanning the spirit into flame—v. 19; 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
  - E. Not despising but respecting prophesying—1 Thes. 5:20; 1 Cor. 14:4b, 12, 31.
- V. “I hope that we all will take not the ordinary Christian way but the overcoming way to be the mighty ones who can match the unique mighty One. Christ is now on the throne in the heavens, waiting for us to be perfected and matured. Eventually the time will be ripe for Him to come back to deal with the nations, to save the remnant of Israel, and to complete God’s economy with us. Then the age of restoration will be ushered in. That age will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God’s expression in Christ” (*Life-study of the Minor Prophets*, pp. 92-93).**