

*All that is known of “Joel” (name meaning ‘Yahweh is God’ (or “The Lord is God”)) is that he was the son of a priest. His ministry occurred after the Restoration from Exile. With Haggai and Zechariah, Joel was a “cultic prophet”—meaning that he could carry out his ministry within the Temple, sometimes even using liturgical forms to express himself. His messages may even have been disseminated through addresses by temple priests.*

*As might be expected, Joel was a strong supporter of the “Temple System,” but he also recognized that without true inner spirituality, worship, whether of individuals or of the nation as a whole, is empty and with no value in the Sight of God. Joel would have approved of Jesus’ challenges to the “whited sepulchers” running the Temple.*

*Joel expanded the apocalyptic and liturgical dimensions of prophecy (preaching challenges to the status quo); he wrote a strong “call to national penitence” as a terrible plague of locusts devastated both the ecology and the economy of Judah.*

*To Joel, this horrible situation signified God visiting His anger upon the people as the consequence of their religious posturing and spiritual indifference.*

The beginning: The locust plague, a disaster of unprecedented proportions

How does Joel interpret this “natural disaster?” Of what is it a manifestation?  
Who are the “drunkards” (1.5)?

What are some of the aspects of national life affected by the plague? If it continues, what will the end result be?

The response: What should the nation’s response be, according to the prophet? (1.2-2.7)  
Do the words in 1.4 sound familiar? How about the words in 2.12-19?

What is the *mood* or the *tone/atmosphere* of the assembly to be?  
Why does the prophet repeat himself sometimes?

What is the nature of “the day of the Lord” in 2.1? In 2.17ff? Who are depicted as the intercessors who change the nature of “the day of the Lord” from the perspective of Israel?

Do the words in 2.28-29 sound familiar? Where do we hear these? Who referred to these words on the Day of Pentecost, and in what context?

What is the true answer to this national emergency? (2.30ff)

The Day of the Lord: How does 3.1 echo content of today’s first lesson (Jacob’s dream)?

Does 3.16 remind you of apocalyptic imagery elsewhere (hint: New Testament)?

For discussion: What plague/s afflict our world? Our society? What answers have people proposed?  
What would Joel say about solutions being proposed today? What has God given us to say (and do)?

Why is it so difficult for people to see what is necessary? What is to be done about this, and where do we start?