

Promises for God’s Past, Present, and Future People: The Book of Joel

Law and Gospel in Joel

Background

- Joel’s prophetic ministry was **to the people of Judah** (Southern Kingdom).
- The date of Joel’s ministry falls within the **ninth century to sixth century B.C.**
- Judah experienced a **plague of locusts**.
 - An important feature of the book of Joel is a plague of locusts, insects that still periodically threaten the crops in large areas of Asia and Africa. The female desert locust lays eggs under the sand in “pods” of about one hundred. There may be as many as one hundred of such egg pods per square foot. **When the insects hatch, usually after rains, they “cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen”** (Exodus 10:5). Hatching may continue for several days, with young hoppers numbering up to one thousand per square foot at any one time. The young insects, each about one-half inch long, **immediately get on the move, looking for green plants to eat. . .**” (*The Peoples’ Bible*: Eickmann, 127).
- Joel proclaimed **law and gospel**.

The Law. . .	Gospel (Good News). . .
is written in the human heart and revealed in God’s word	is a mystery unknown to people by nature and is revealed by Jesus as our Savior.
demands perfect obedience from people	makes no demands but only offers the grace (undeserved love) of God to people
promises salvation and life to those who obey all its demands	promises salvation to those who have broken the law
says that all who obey the law shall be justified	says that those who have not kept the law shall be justified, and that a person is justified without obedience to the law
says that God will not forgive sin nor acquit the sinner	says God has acquitted all sinners, that he has forgiven the sins of the world
says that every sinner is to be cursed	says that all people are blessed in Christ
says that God hates sinners	says that God loves all people
says that God is angry with sinners	says that God is reconciled to all mankind and his anger gone
has the effect of making people angry at God	has the effect of reconciling people with God
terrifies sinners, as it is intended	casts out all fear
must be preached to make the comfortable distressed	must be preached to make the distressed comfortable

- The **balance of law and gospel** in Joel is about **50/50**.
 - **First half** is primarily **law** (1:1-2:17). **Second half** is primarily **gospel** (2:18-3:21)
- Joel does not point out any specific sins when proclaiming law. Why?
- Joel uses **restoration language** to share the **gospel**.

