

• *God's call to the nation's leaders*

We have seen how God can use a crisis to wake up His people when they become careless. When this happens God calls upon responsible people to lead the community in prayer and bring the matter to Him. Joel addresses the elders¹, the people of the capital city, Jerusalem², the farmers³ and the priests⁴ – and the drunkards also⁵!

1:2
1:8
1:11
1:13
1:5

1. *A word for the leaders in Jerusalem*

1. Joel has **a word for the leaders of society in the city of Jerusalem¹**.

1:8-10

*'Wail like a girl dressed in sackcloth
grieving for the husband of her youth.'* (1:8)

Verse 8 is dealing with the city of Jerusalem. Often in the prophets the city of Jerusalem is addressed as though the city were a young woman. Often Jerusalem is called 'the daughter of Zion'¹. Why does he specially address the 'daughter of Zion'? Jerusalem is the capital city. It is a place of responsibility. The temple is there. During the times of the kings, the king would be there, and his palace. The high priest would be there.

¹ as in 2 Kings 19:21; Lamentations 2:13

Jerusalem was the place of leadership. The Bible always expects that leaders should take the lead. Joel calls upon the leaders. He referred to the elders in Joel 1:2. They should take a lead in spiritual matters. Jerusalem is addressed because it is an important place in Israel; the inhabitants should take a lead in turning to the Lord. He expects that these leaders will have a concern for the spiritual welfare of the people. Joel is especially concerned that the spiritual life of the country is suffering.

• *Offerings of grain and wine affected by the plague of locusts*

*'The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the LORD.
The priests mourn,
those who minister before the LORD.'* (1:9)

This plague of locusts affected the crops and that in turn affected the temple. In the temple there would be various offerings and these needed grain and wine. But both the grain and the vines (from which the wine came) were affected by the locusts.

We should always be concerned at events in the life of our friends or our church or our nation which affect spiritual life.

• *Different Offerings*

Different offerings in the days of Joel and the Mosaic law expressed different things. The burnt offering expressed self-consecration. The grain-offering spoke of the consecration of one's work and one's home. It took a lot of preparation at home. Every morning and every evening there was a burnt offering offered to God. But with it was the grain offering, speaking of the consecration of one's labour. And there was the drink offering, which spoke of one's willingness to pour out one's life to God.

The leaders are also to be concerned for the well-being of the agriculture and the countryside. Joel says:

*'The field is ruined,
the land mourns,
for the grain is ruined,
the new wine dries up.
Fresh oil fails.'*

(1:10)

• **Principles of leadership**

So there are three principles here.

- (i) Leaders should lead. Joel wants the city of Jerusalem to act.
- (ii) Leaders should notice what is happening and take responsibility. No one is a good leader if he does not take the initiative.
- (iii) The leaders' responsibility involves seeking God.

2. A word for the leaders of the land

2. In the next two verses¹ Joel addresses **the commercial leaders of the land, the farmers:**

¹ 1:11–12

*'Be ashamed, you farmers.
Wail, you vine growers
for the wheat and the barley;
because the harvest of the field is destroyed.*

(1:11)

*The vine is dried up,
and the fig-tree is withered.
The pomegranate, the palm, and the apple tree –
all the trees of the field are destroyed,
and the rejoicing of the people is withered away.'*

(1:12)

• **Your responsibility is the area of life where God has put you**

The principle here is: you are responsible for the area of life where God has specially put you. Think of the situation here. The locusts affected the land and the agriculture. Now the farmers were specially involved in this. They were responsible for the feeding of the country and provision of grain and wine for the temple services. If this problem specially concerns the area of life in which they are involved, then they should specially be turning to the Lord in prayer. The principle is: you are responsible for the area of life where God has put you.

People are suffering: 'the rejoicing... is withered away'. The farmers are specially involved with what is happening and what is causing the suffering of the people. So they specially must take responsibility and seek God's mercy and help.

3. A word for the spiritual leaders

3. Joel 1:13–14 address **the spiritual leaders of the land** and especially the leaders of the worship and ministry in Jerusalem: **the priests.**

They are to lead the nation in repentance. Sackcloth is a sign of repentance. It was very rough to wear, because it was made of goats' hair. It was a sign of seriousness with God.

• **Repentance**

*'Put on sackcloth and mourn, O priests,
Wail, you who minister at the altar.'* (1:13)

They must take time to seek God.

• **Seek God**

*'Come, spend the night in sackcloth,
you ministers of my God...'* (1:13)

• **Consider his ways**

They must consider their ways. They must think about the desperate plight they are in. If you really want to know God you must give Him time.

‘ . . . For the grain offering and the drink-offering are withheld from your house of God.’ (1:13)

• **Involve others**

They must get others involved.

‘Consecrate a fast. Call an assembly. Gather the elders, gather all who live in the land, to the house of the LORD your God...’ (1:14)

• **Great seriousness**

They must be in great seriousness about this matter.

‘... and cry to the LORD.’ (1:14)

• **Today – through Jesus and his blood**

In the days we are in, after the coming of Jesus, we involve our Lord Jesus in all of this. We approach God through Jesus. In every time of crisis, every period of blessing, it is a time for seeking God in a special way, approaching Him through the blood of Jesus.



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