

# My Favorite Thing About JOEL and AMOS

Joel 2:1-2  
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The phrase “*a shot across the bow*” is an expression that comes from the navy. It is a deliberate miss or warning shot that demonstrates to the enemy vessel that he is within range of your guns and that he’d better stop whatever he’s doing BECAUSE what’s coming next WILL NOT end well for him.

That brings us to **My favorite Thing About JOEL and AMOS ---- A Shot Across the Bow**

We know very little about Joel or the dates of his ministry. We do know that his ministry began in Judah during a time of unprecedented national disaster - the type remembered for generations. They had been invaded by a powerful foe. But this was no ordinary invasion. It was a locust invasion.

- **Joel 1:2-5** - Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your forefathers? <sup>3</sup> Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation. <sup>4</sup> What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. <sup>5</sup> **Wake up!!...**

One might be tempted to consider this invasion as just “*Mother Nature in a bad mood*” or “*global warming*”, but how are the people of God to make sense of this locust plague?

Back in the Book of Deuteronomy God spoke to His people about taking seriously their Voluntary Covenant Relationship with Him {**Deut. 28-30**}. One of the **threatened** consequences for unfaithfulness was a locust plague.

- **Deut. 28:38, 42** - You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it ... Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land.

After the locust had moved on, Joel called for a time of fasting and repentance:

- **Joel 1:13-14** - Put on sackcloth, O priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. <sup>14</sup> Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

Why? Because as bad as the locust plague was, it was not the worst thing that could happen to Judah – **it was a warning shot.**

- **Joel 2:1-2** - Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand -- <sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and **mighty army** comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come.

What could Judah expect from this vast army?

- All is green and beautiful when they arrive, but a desolate wilderness when they leave – nothing escapes – they consume everything that gets in their way.
- They rush through defenses and climb city walls without effort and they enter houses like thieves.
- Before them the earth quakes and the heavens tremble.

This will not end well for Judah. If they insist and persist in rebellion, they will experience further judgment. **HOWEVER!!** None of the consequences Joel described had to happen:

- **Joel 2:12-13** - 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' <sup>13</sup> **Rend your heart** and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

**The people of Judah were in the driver's seat and THEIR choices would determine their fate. The warnings went unheeded and in 586 BC Judah was destroyed by Babylon.**

We know a bit more about Amos: He was a shepherd {1:1} and fig grower {7:14} and the majority of his prophecies were against Israel {7:15}.

During his ministry, Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II was king of Israel.

He delivered his first sermon in (roughly) 762 BC – 2 years before “*the earthquake*”, an earthquake so violent and destructive that Zechariah mentions it in his prophecies some 230 years later.

During this time both Judah and Israel experienced great political and economic success and they wrongly concluded that their prosperity was proof of their elevated status as God’s “*Chosen People*”, however:

- **Amos 1:2** - He said: "The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers."

In this one verse we have the reason for Amos’ prophetic message - the God of the universe is pronouncing judgement upon His people for their empty faith and moral decay. It is a warning – a shot across the bow – please stop before it’s too late!

Apparently, God had been trying to get their attention for some time {4:6-11}:

- "I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me,".
- "I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up. <sup>8</sup> People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me,".
- "Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me,".
- "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me,".
- "I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me,".

This will not end well for Israel. If they insist and persist in rebellion, they will experience further judgment.

- **Amos 9:9-10** - For I will give the command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground. <sup>10</sup> All the sinners among my people will die by the sword, all those who say, 'Disaster will not overtake or meet us.'

**HOWEVER!!** None of the consequences Amos described had to happen:

- **Amos 5:4** - This is what the LORD says to the house of Israel: Seek me and live;
- **Amos 5:14** - Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.

**The people of Israel were in the driver’s seat and THEIR choices would determine their fate. The warnings went unheeded and in 722 BC Israel was destroyed by Assyria.**

**Question** ---- If you have warned your child that getting too close to the edge of the cliff is reckless and dangerous, so **DON’T GO OVER THERE**, yet, minutes later you see that child taking selfies right at the edge of the cliff, what do you do? He has not taken seriously your warning and doesn’t seem to care that there is a 1000 ft. drop just over the edge, but you see the danger ..... so, what do you do?

- Yell and wave your arms – a shot across the bow..... But that doesn’t work – he gives you stink eye than ignores you.
- Pick up a rock and throw it – another shot across the bow..... It might strike him and cause pain, but that’s better than that 1000 ft. drop..... But that doesn’t work either – you are still being ignored and he continues to take selfies – even daring to dangle his leg over the edge. Just to prove he can.
- You take off running as fast as you can. You know that if you tackle your child, you will likely break bones, but you’re willing to risk it, you’re willing to be misunderstood, because you love that child and a broken leg is better than that 1000 ft. drop. He cares so little about your efforts to save him that he doesn’t even see you coming – **EVEN THOUGH** you have shot warnings across his bow.

You hit your child knocking him away from the edge. There are broken bones, but he is safe..... he is also ungrateful! All he can do is glare at you and swear at you for ruining his fun. He doesn’t care that your love for him compelled you to act. All he cares about is that you interfered. He was fine. There was no **REAL** danger. How dare you!!!

Now, amp that up by 1000% and you have God’s dilemma in dealing with His people. His people then....

- **Jeremiah 35:15** - Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers." But you have not paid attention or listened to me.

- **Jeremiah 44:4-5** - Again and again I sent my servants the prophets, who said, 'Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!' <sup>5</sup> But they did not listen or pay attention; they did not turn from their wickedness or stop burning incense to other gods.
- **Ezekiel 33:11** - Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

AND His people now.

- **John Eldredge {Epic pg. 64}** – The challenge God faces is rescuing a people who have no idea how captive they are; no real idea how desperate they are.

Christians spend a lot of time condemning the world for its obvious sins. **HOWEVER**, in scripture, God is most concerned about the sins of His own people and in **Joel** and **Amos**, He spends a significant amount of time shooting across their bow because of **THEIR** sins.

We need to be very careful of thinking that because we are *“Christians”* and because we go to church and do *“churchy”* things that our sins are okay. That what we do doesn't matter:

- **Amos 5:7-12** - You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground... <sup>10</sup> you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth. <sup>11</sup> You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. <sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
- **Amos 5:21-24** - I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. <sup>22</sup> Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. <sup>23</sup> Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!
- **1 Peter 4:17** - For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

God would much rather demonstrate His gracious and compassionate love toward His people – Discipline and judgment are never His first choice. Judgment only occurs after great provocation and He does it in the hope that it will stop the deadly spread of rebellion and disobedience and bring His people back – from the edge of the cliff – from certain death – before it's too late.

Even though the consequences on the heart of God will be great, He is willing to risk it ---- He is willing to be misunderstood, because His love compels Him to act. He will do everything in His power to stop that eternal 1000 ft. crash. He is hoping that the shots across the bow will work and you will see the danger you are in and return to Him for healing and restoration. He doesn't want to go to DefCon5, but He will if He has to.

As Joel says – each of us has a decision to make **{3:14-16}**. A day will come when Jesus will come again in might and power and judgment. The sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will no longer shine.

- **Matthew 24:30** - At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.
- **Revelation 19:11-16** - I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

This will not be a good day for those who have **CHOSEN** rebellion – including those who **CLAIM** to be Christ Followers. We have been given ample evidence of God's love and care and faithfulness and plenty of warning that He is serious about sin and rebellion and holiness and enough shots across the bow to stop us in our tracks before it's too late.

You Choose.....