

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This and the beginning of the next chapter contain a double prophecy, applicable in its primary sense to a plague of locusts which was to devour the land, and to be accompanied with a severe drought and famine; and in its secondary sense it denotes the Chaldean invasion. Both senses must be admitted: for some of the expressions will apply only to the dearth by insects; others to the desolation by war. The contexture of both is beautiful and well conducted. In this chapter the distress of every order of people is strongly painted; and not only does the face of nature languish when the God of nature is displeased, vv. 1-19; but the very beasts of the field, by a bold figure, are represented as supplicating God in their distress, and reproaching the stupidity of man, Joel 1:20.

Verse 1

The word of the Lord that came to Joel - See the introduction for some account of this prophet, whose history is very obscure. Bishop Newcome thinks that he prophesied while the kingdom of Judah subsisted, and refers to Joel 2:1, Joel 2:15, (see also Joel 1:14 (note), and the note there), but not long before its subversion as his words, Joel 3:1, seem to imply that its captivity was approaching. See 2 Kings 21:10-15. He therefore favors the conjecture of Drusius, that this prophet lived under Manasseh, and before his conversion, 2 Chronicles 33:13; that is, some time from before Christ 697 to (suppose) 660.

Verse 2

Ye old men - Instead of אֲנֹכְחִים (hazzekenim) old men, a few MSS. have אֲנֹכְחִים (hacchohanim), ye priests, but improperly.

Hath this been in your days - He begins very abruptly; and before he proposes his subject, excites attention and alarm by intimating that he is about to announce disastrous events, such as the oldest man among them has never seen, nor any of them learnt from the histories of ancient times.

Verse 3

Tell ye your children of it - To heighten the effect, he still conceals the subject, and informs them that it is such as should be handed down from father to son through all generations.

Verse 4

That which the palmerworm hath left - Here he begins to open his message, and the words he chooses show that he is going to announce a devastation of the land by locusts, and a famine consequent on their depredations. What the different insects may be which he specifies is not easy to determine. I shall give the words of the original, with their etymology.

The palmerworm, אֲרֵב (gizam), from the same root, to cut short; probably the caterpillar, or some such blight, from its cutting the leaves of the trees into pieces for its nourishment.

The locust, חֲסִיל (arbeh), from אָרַב (rabah), to multiply, from the immense increase and multitude of this insect.

Cankerworm, אֵלֶק (yelek), from אָלַק (lak), to lick or lap with the tongue; the reference is uncertain.

Caterpillar, אֲכָלִי (chasil), from אָכַל (chasal), to consume, to eat up, the consumer. Bishop Newcome translates the first grasshopper; the second, locust; the third, devouring locust; and the fourth, consuming locust. After all that has been said by interpreters concerning these four animals, I am fully of opinion that the arbeh , or locust himself, is the gizam , the yelek , and the chasil and that these different names are used here by the prophet to point out the locust in its different states, or progress from embryo to full growth. See the note on Joel 2:2 (note).

Verse 5

Awake, ye drunkards - The general destruction of vegetation by these devouring creatures has totally prevented both harvest and vintage; so that there shall not be wine even for necessary uses, much less for the purposes of debauchery. It is well known that the ruin among the vines by locusts prevents the vintage for several years after.

Verse 6

A nation is come up upon my land - That real locusts are intended there can be little doubt; but it is thought that this may be a double prophecy, and that the destruction by the Chaldeans may also be intended, and that the four kinds of locusts mentioned above may mean the four several attacks made on Judea by them. The first in the last year of Nabonassar, (father of Nebuchadnezzar), which was the third of Jehoiakim; the second when

