

Joel – Amos

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

Joel and Amos are two of the “minor prophets,” books that are not long but that are full of challenges to the people from the prophets’ understanding of what God wanted the people to be.

Very little is known of **Joel**, although his writings appear to show that he lived in Judah sometime between 539-331 BC. He seems to have been well acquainted with the Temple and its priesthood, and is considered a “cultic prophet”—someone who shared his ministry within context of the Temple activities. He begins his book with the message that a plague of locusts is God’s judgment on the land, calling the people to repentance, and then talking about the coming of God and God’s judgments on the land and people.

The best-known part of his book is the section that talks about what will happen when God’s spirit comes upon the land:

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

Amos is a prophet of Israel from around 760-750 BC. He was originally a shepherd who responded to God’s call to preach dependence on God rather than military might at a time when the people took their military security and affluence as signs of God’s favor.

He also called the people to accountability for injustice in social dealings, immorality, and shallow and meaningless piety and worship. His unwillingness to compromise brought him into conflict with the religious authorities of his day and he was expelled from the royal sanctuary at Bethel and told not to prophesy there any more.

He apparently went back to Judah and put his prophecies in writing in the form we have them. They fall into three major parts:

Chapters 1-2 – prophecies against Israel’s neighbors
Chapters 3-6 – condemnation of Israel for sin and injustice
Chapters 7-9 – visions of Israel’s coming doom

Amos was one of the first of the prophets whose words have had a major impact on thinking about God and human history.