

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20, Structure and Content of Joel Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20, Structure and Content of Joel, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Robert Vannoy's lecture on the Book of Joel explores its structure and content, particularly the relationship between the locust plague described in chapter 1 and the Day of the Lord imagery in chapter 2. He references interpretations by Hobart Freeman and Bullock, who offer different views on whether these chapters should be read literally, allegorically, or apocalyptically. Vannoy also addresses the chronological sequence within the book, suggesting it is structured around three parallel descriptions of the Day of the Lord, as evidenced by similar language in 2:10-11, 2:31, and 3:15. He analyzes Joel 1:1-20 as a description of an actual locust plague combined with drought and fire, serving as a call to repentance. The lecture also discusses the translation and interpretation of Joel 2:18, focusing on whether it refers to past or future events and its significance for understanding the book's overall structure.

2. 35 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Foundations).



**Vannoy_FoundProp
hecy_Session20.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20, Structure and Content of Joel

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Robert Vannoy's lecture on the Book of Joel:

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy on the Structure and Content of Joel

Main Themes:

- **Structure of Joel:** Vannoy focuses heavily on the overall structure of the book, arguing against a common division at Joel 2:17/18. He proposes an alternative structure based on recurring descriptions of the Day of the LORD.
- **Interpretation of Locust Plague:** A central point is whether the locust plague described in Joel 1 is literal, figurative (allegorical), or a combination (apocalyptic). This directly impacts how the subsequent chapters are understood.
- **The Day of the LORD:** This is a major theme throughout Joel. Vannoy emphasizes that it is described in three distinct but parallel sections, each highlighting different aspects: judgment using locust imagery, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and judgment on the nations with salvation for God's people.
- **Call to Repentance:** The locust plague is seen as a judgment from God and a call to repentance. This repentance is crucial to avoiding further eschatological judgment on the Day of the Lord.
- **Prophetic Interpretation:** Vannoy delves into the nuances of Hebrew grammar, specifically the "prophetic perfect" tense, to argue for a future-oriented interpretation of certain passages (like Joel 2:18) where others see completed action.

Most Important Ideas and Facts:

1. Three Interpretations of Joel 1 & 2:

- **Apocalyptic (Freeman):** Chapter 1 is a literal locust plague; Chapter 2 uses locusts as figurative imagery for a future invasion. *"Such an approach takes chapter 1 as a literal description of an actual locust plague that had recently devastated the land. Then Joel uses that description for apocalyptic imagery in chapter 2 where he is describing a future invasion of Judah by her enemies in the latter days."*

- **Allegorical:** Both chapters are figurative, representing a series of historical enemy attacks (Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome). *"It takes both chapters figuratively and sees in them descriptions of a series of enemy attacks in their future history. The four types of locusts mentioned in 1:4... That is viewed as four invasions of Israel. The four types of locusts representing Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome."*
- **Literal:** Both chapters describe literal locust plagues, with Chapter 2 being a more severe plague that precedes the Day of the LORD. *"Both chapter 1 and chapter 2 describe severe locusts plagues. The one in chapter 2 is more severe than chapter 1 as it is the one that will usher in the Day of the Lord in a future time."*

1. Vannoy's Proposed Structure:

- **Joel 1:1-20:** Description of a contemporary, literal locust plague, interpreted as a judgment from God and a call to repentance. *"The book divides into two sections... Roman numeral I, is chapter 1:1-20a—description of a contemporary locust plague. I take that as a literal locust plague that happened during the time of Joel's ministry, and he interprets that as a judgment from the Lord and issues a call to repentance."*
- **Joel 2:1-3:21:** Three parallel descriptions of the coming Day of the LORD, each focusing on a different aspect. *"What you find in the second section of the book is three descriptions of the coming Day of the LORD and these three descriptions complement each other. They address different aspects of coming of the Day of the LORD."*
2:1-27: Day of the LORD described using the imagery of the locust plague from chapter 1. *"In 2:1-27 the day of the LORD is described in the imagery of the present locusts and drought. In other words, Joel picks up the language of chapter 1 in which he has described a literal locust plague and uses that to speak of the eschatological Day of the LORD."*
- **2:28-32:** Promise of the Holy Spirit, which will precede the Day of the LORD (Acts 2 quotation). *"In 2:28-32 you have the promise of coming of the Holy Spirit which will precede the Day of the LORD. That's that well known passage quoted in the book of Acts 2, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh' and that pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh is to precede the Day of the Lord."*
- **3:1-21:** Judgment on the nations and salvation of God's people in connection to the coming of the Day of the LORD. *"Then a third description of the coming of the Day of the LORD is 3:1-21... which speaks of the judgment on the nations and the salvation of God's people in connection to the coming of the Day of the LORD."*

1. **Recurring Language of the Day of the LORD:** Vannoy highlights the repetition of specific phrases related to cosmic signs (darkened sun and moon) in Joel 2:10-11, 2:31, and 3:15 as evidence for his structural argument. *"Let me give you an alternative suggestion to what Bullock is suggesting as far as structure. It is my view that in analyzing the structure of the book it is important to notice that 2:10 and 11 and 2:31 and 3:15 give a similar sign for the Day of the Lord that is referred to in 2:1 as coming."*
2. **The "Northern Army":** The phrase "invader from the north" (Joel 2:20) is interpreted as a technical term for the enemies of Israel, often with apocalyptic significance (referencing Zechariah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zephaniah). *"The 'north' is a technical term in the Old Testament which often appears in passages of an apocalyptic nature and in such contexts is always symbol of the enemies of Israel."* Allen's commentary draws a parallel to Tolkien's grim hosts of Mordor, and connects it to Ezekiel 38-39.
3. **Challenge to Dividing at 2:17/18:** Vannoy argues that dividing the book at this point obscures the three parallel descriptions of the Day of the LORD. He also questions the assumption that a day of repentance actually occurred between verses 17 and 18, citing the future tense implications of 2:18. *"The problem with this, in my view, is there is no mention of the presumably held day of repentance. It's called for but there is no description of it having actually taken place."*
4. **"Prophetic Perfect" and Joel 2:18:** Vannoy discusses the Hebrew grammar of Joel 2:18 ("Then the LORD will be jealous/was jealous") and argues that the waw consecutive with the imperfect tense *can* be interpreted as future, due to the concept of the "prophetic perfect." This allows for a more consistent reading of the passage as prophecy rather than retrospective account. *"However, you look in this discussion at Ridderbos, for example, as well as others, argues the form that is the waw consecutive with the imperfect does not exclude the possibility of translating the verbs as future. 'But then the LORD will be jealous for his land.' That's the way the NIV translates it."* He refers to Jouon's *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* to support this view.

Key Quotes:

- *"Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near."* (Joel 1:15) This emphasizes the imminent sense of divine judgment.
- *"Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments."* (Joel 2:12-13) This highlights the call to genuine repentance.
- *"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."* (Joel 2:28) A key prophecy fulfilled in Acts 2, connecting Joel to the New Testament.

Conclusion:

Vannoy's lecture provides a detailed analysis of the structure and content of Joel, focusing on the interpretation of the locust plague, the meaning of the Day of the LORD, and the call to repentance. His alternative structural proposal, supported by grammatical arguments and textual evidence, offers a fresh perspective on this important prophetic book. He emphasizes the importance of careful attention to the text and its historical and theological context.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20, Structure and Content of Joel

A Study Guide to Vannoy's Lecture on Joel

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the core question that interpreters must address when studying the book of Joel, according to Vannoy and Freeman?
2. Describe Freeman's "apocalyptic interpretation" of Joel.
3. How does the "allegorical interpretation" view the locusts mentioned in Joel 1:4?
4. Briefly explain the "literal view" of interpreting Joel.
5. How does Bullock categorize the interpretations of Joel 1:1-2:17, and how does his "apocalyptic" category differ from Freeman's?
6. According to Vannoy, where does Bullock and many other interpreters divide the book of Joel into two major sections?
7. What specific verses in Joel does Vannoy highlight as containing similar signs of the Day of the Lord?
8. What are the two main sections into which Vannoy divides the book of Joel?
9. What three elements combined in the contemporary judgment described in Joel 1?
10. According to Vannoy what section of Joel does he think describes the eschatological Day of the Lord?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The core question is the relationship between chapter 1 and chapter 2, specifically whether the locust plague is literal or figurative. Different interpretive approaches hinge on answering this question.
2. Freeman's apocalyptic interpretation sees chapter 1 as a literal description of a recent locust plague. Chapter 2 is seen as a figurative extension using the imagery of the locusts to describe a future invasion of Judah by her enemies in the latter days.

3. The allegorical interpretation views the four types of locusts mentioned as representing four successive enemy invasions of Israel: Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. This view interprets both chapters figuratively.
4. The literal view interprets both chapter 1 and chapter 2 as descriptions of severe locust plagues. The plague in chapter 2 is considered more severe and associated with the coming Day of the Lord.
5. Bullock categorizes the interpretations as historical literal, allegorical, and apocalyptic. Bullock's apocalyptic category refers to eschatological, extraterrestrial invaders ushering in the Day of the Lord, unlike Freeman's use of the term.
6. Bullock and many others divide the book at Joel 2:17, seeing 1:1-2:17 as a lamentation and 2:18-3:21 as a change of fortune and future blessing resulting from repentance.
7. Vannoy highlights Joel 2:10-11, 2:31, and 3:15 as containing similar language and signs related to the Day of the Lord, specifically the darkening of the sun and moon.
8. Vannoy divides the book into two sections: Joel 1:1-20, describing a contemporary locust plague, and Joel 2:1-3:21, containing three parallel descriptions of the coming Day of the Lord.
9. The judgment in Joel 1 combined a locust plague with drought and fire, which together caused widespread devastation.
10. Vannoy believes Joel 2:1-3:21 describes the eschatological Day of the Lord, consisting of three parallel accounts emphasizing different aspects of this event.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast Freeman's and Bullock's approaches to interpreting the book of Joel, highlighting their differences in the use of the term "apocalyptic." Evaluate which approach is more helpful in understanding the text.
2. Discuss Vannoy's proposed structure of Joel, explaining his rationale for dividing the book differently from Bullock and other interpreters. Analyze the significance of the verses he uses to support his structure.
3. Explain the translation issue in Joel 2:18, detailing the debate surrounding the use of the "prophetic perfect" and its implications for understanding the structure and message of the book.
4. Examine the significance of the locust plague described in Joel 1, discussing whether it should be interpreted literally or figuratively. Analyze how Joel uses this plague as a manifestation of the Day of the Lord.
5. Discuss the three descriptions of the Day of the Lord in Joel 2:1-3:21. What aspects of the Day of the Lord are emphasized in each description?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocalyptic Interpretation:** A method of interpreting prophecy that distinguishes between literal events in the present and symbolic or figurative representations of future, often eschatological, events.
- **Allegorical Interpretation:** A method of interpreting prophecy that views events and figures as symbolic representations of deeper spiritual or historical realities.
- **Literal Interpretation:** A method of interpreting prophecy that understands events and figures as historical and factual occurrences.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the end times, final events, or ultimate destiny of humanity and the world.
- **Day of the LORD:** A recurring theme in the Old Testament, referring to a time of divine intervention, judgment, and salvation, often associated with cosmic upheaval and eschatological events.
- **Locust Plague:** A devastating swarm of locusts that consumes vegetation and crops, often seen as a sign of divine judgment.
- **Prophetic Perfect:** A Hebrew grammatical construction where a verb in the perfect tense is used to describe a future event with certainty, as if it has already occurred.
- **Waw Consecutive:** A grammatical feature in Biblical Hebrew where the conjunction "waw" (and) links verbs together in a sequence, affecting their tense and aspect.
- **Masoretic Text:** The authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament, established by Jewish scholars during the Middle Ages.
- **Repentance:** The act of turning away from sin and returning to God, often involving sorrow, confession, and a commitment to change one's behavior.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 18, Session 20, Structure and Content of Joel, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Joel: Frequently Asked Questions

- **How do different interpretations approach the relationship between Joel Chapter 1 and Chapter 2?** Some interpret Chapter 1 literally (a real locust plague) and Chapter 2 figuratively (eschatological event using locust imagery). Another view sees both chapters as figurative, describing a series of enemy attacks. A third approach takes both chapters literally, depicting two severe locust plagues, with Chapter 2's plague ushering in the Day of the Lord.
- **What are the key differences between Freeman's and Bullock's approaches to interpreting Joel?** Freeman categorizes interpretations as apocalyptic (literal Chapter 1, figurative Chapter 2), allegorical (both chapters figurative), and literal (both chapters literal). Bullock focuses on whether the locusts are literal (historical), allegorical (invading armies), or apocalyptic (extra-terrestrial invaders, a less common view). Vannoy considers Freeman's categories more helpful.
- **Where do many interpreters divide the book of Joel, and why does Vannoy disagree with this division?** Many interpreters, including Bullock, divide the book between Joel 2:17 and 2:18. They see 1:1-2:17 as lamenting locust plagues and divine judgment, and 2:18-3:21 as describing a shift to future blessing following repentance. Vannoy argues this division obscures the three parallel descriptions of the Day of the Lord found throughout the book.
- **What is Vannoy's proposed structure for the book of Joel?** Vannoy suggests the book divides into two main sections: Joel 1:1-20, a description of a contemporary locust plague interpreted as divine judgment, and Joel 2:1-3:21, which contains three parallel descriptions of the coming Day of the Lord.
- **What are the three descriptions of the Day of the Lord that Vannoy identifies in Joel 2:1-3:21?** The three descriptions are: (1) Joel 2:1-27, which uses locust imagery to depict the Day of the Lord; (2) Joel 2:28-32 (or Chapter 3 in the Hebrew Bible), focusing on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit preceding the Day of the Lord; and (3) Joel 3:1-21 (or Chapter 4 in the Hebrew Bible), portraying judgment on the nations and salvation for God's people.

- **What elements combined to create the sense of devastation in Joel 1:1-20?** The devastation was caused by a combination of a locust plague, drought, and fire, leading to withered vegetation and desolation of the land.
- **Why does Vannoy reject the allegorical interpretation of the four types of locusts mentioned in Joel 1:4?** Vannoy notes that while Hebrew has several words for locusts, the order of the four terms used in 1:4 differs from the order used in 2:25. This suggests they do not represent stages of locust growth, and Vannoy sees no basis for connecting them to specific empires like Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome.
- **What is the translation issue in Joel 2:18, and how does it affect the interpretation of the book's structure?** The Hebrew text in Joel 2:18 contains a *waw* consecutive with the imperfect verb form, which is sometimes translated as past tense ("The LORD was jealous") and sometimes as future tense ("The LORD will be jealous"). Translating it in the past tense implies that the repentance called for in verses 12-17 has already occurred, leading some to see this as a major turning point in the book. However, Vannoy argues that the form can also be translated as future, and that interpreting it as such avoids dividing the book at this point, allowing for a continued flow of the Day of the Lord theme from 2:1-27.