

Joel 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

Analysis

"For a nation is come up upon my land" describes the locust invasion using military terminology. The Hebrew *goy* (nation) typically refers to foreign peoples but here describes an insect army God sovereignly commands. This metaphor establishes that God controls nature to accomplish His purposes—natural disasters function as instruments of divine judgment. "Strong, and without number" emphasizes overwhelming force. The phrase "whose teeth are the teeth of a lion" uses vivid imagery communicating destructive power. Lions epitomized strength and terror. This language prepares readers for Joel's later description of the ultimate "Day of the LORD" when God's judgment will be final and inescapable. Theologically, this teaches God's sovereignty over creation and His use of even insects to accomplish judicial purposes.

Historical Context

Locust plagues were devastating in the ancient Near East. Swarms containing billions of insects could darken the sky, devouring every green plant within hours. Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, and other records describe similar catastrophes. The military language also functions symbolically pointing beyond the immediate plague to future military invasion (likely Babylon's conquest in 586 BC). Joel employs near fulfillment (locust plague) anticipating ultimate fulfillment (eschatological Day of the LORD).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 – God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's sovereignty over natural disasters affect your response to them?
2. What does Joel's judgment imagery teach about the certainty of final judgment?

Interlinear Text

כִּי גָּוֹי הַלְּעֵל עַל אֶרְצִי מִזְרָח וְאֶל	H3588 For a nation is come up H5921 upon my land strong H369
H1471 H5927 H776 H6099	

מִסְפָּר	שְׁבִי	שְׁבִי	אַרְיֵה
and without number	are the teeth	are the teeth	of a lion

לְבָבָ יְהֹוָה מִתְלָעַ וְתָ
and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion H4973 H3833 H0

Additional Cross-References

Joel 2:25 (Parallel theme): And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.