

The Locusts

God's Teachers

*"Four things are small on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise: The ants are not a strong people, But they prepare their food in the summer; The shephanim are not mighty people, Yet they make their houses in the rocks; **The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks**; The lizard you may grasp with the hands, Yet it is in kings' palaces" (Proverbs 30:24-28).*

One of the ten plagues against Egypt and a disaster to farmlands even now, swarming locust are a source of continual study. From an agricultural standpoint, how to prevent or get rid of them. From a scientific perspective, they are a wonder of nature. From a biblical position, they offer an insight into both the blessings and punishments from God. Notice God's reference to them in prophesy. "Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, **My great army** which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25).

The reference in Joel mentions four stages in the life cycle of locusts that follow the growth from egg to full adult. Locusts do not undergo a complete metamorphosis like moths and butterflies. Although they look a lot like grasshoppers, their swarming behavior in green-favorable habitats makes them different. Locusts go through egg, nymph, and adult stages. After hatching, the nymphs crawl to the surface and hop around through several stages of growth, shedding their skin and developing wings. The locust nymphs tend to congregate in bands, devouring what they find.

The fledglings, called such while their wings develop, consume large amounts of green matter to increase wing development and egg production. They still cannot fly during this period of final development. Full-grown adults consume massive amounts of food and move on because the successive stages of growth have removed the food supply. When the vegetation is gone, they move in large swarms to other green areas and begin their seven to eight-week life cycle again.

Solomon's words in Proverbs 30:8, "*they go out in ranks,*" refer to a unified military movement. Locusts move as if a signal to deploy were given and begin the siege of a new objective. The description in Joel 2:2-10 is that of a nation invading to destroy. The comparison between that nation and the locusts provides a lesson about what God's army can accomplish. As the devastation caused by the swarms of locusts is known, the accomplishment of God's judgment can be imagined. With the loss of vegetation, animals will die of starvation. The people cannot survive, and the entire population, including the ruler and all in authority, will disappear.

Looking at God's people, there is spiritual growth from birth, by water and the Spirit, until this life is over. In the various stages of growth, we learn, obey, teach what we know, and grow. The process continues as we mature in knowledge, faith, and work for the Lord. When the called out, the church, spreads over the surface of the earth and works in unison, the power of Satan and his agents cannot stand. As the locusts spread out in ranks over a territory and work independently to fulfill their God-given duties, the church is fulfilling the responsibilities given by Christ. The prophet Joel said, "*The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?*" (Joel 2:11). The power of the evil one is destroyed while the Lord's people, clothed with the full armor of God, can "*stand firm against the schemes of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11). Luke tells us about Paul before he took up his Greek name, "*But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ*" (Acts 9:22).

Years later, Paul reminded the brethren at Ephesus that we have a battle to fight. "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*"

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:12-18).

Will we close ranks and join the fight, spread the gospel, and defeat evil?