

Joel - The Day of the Lord

6.10.18

I think by now most of you know how much I love the introduction of a new teaching! The exegetic process of discovering and connecting the historical context, spiritual revelation, and present-day relevance is one of the great joys of my life and pulpit ministry. Introducing the Book of Joel is simple yet impossible - paradoxical. The book is simple in that Joel 1:1 tells us all we really know—this is a collection of the words God gave to an otherwise unknown man named Joel, whose father was an otherwise unknown person named Pethuel. The book of Joel is impossible in that many get lost in sorting through the imagery of the author and the mixed signals of authenticity. It's been said about the book Joel - Simple in its hope, impossible in its horror. We are not going to get lost there. By faith we will accept the book of Joel as the authoritative and inspired word of God. From there we will accept by faith that Joel's prophetic voice although not completely about us, is indeed one hundred percent for us.

God's word came to Joel to deliver to Jerusalem in the midst of a devastating locust plague that had destroyed the crops, made temple sacrifices impossible, and caused the priests to lament and put on mourning clothes. The locusts represented a nation about to invade Judah, so Joel called Jerusalem to fast and pray to God for help.

Joel 1:1-20

The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel: Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.

What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

Awake, you drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white. Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the Lord. The priests mourn, the ministers of the Lord. The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes.

Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes.

Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man. Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.

Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly.

Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods; the storehouses are desolate; the granaries are torn down because the grain has dried up. How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed because there is no pasture for them; even the flocks of sheep suffer. To you, O Lord, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Joel – The Chapters and Context

Bible scholars have followed many thought threads of evidence seeking more confirmed knowledge about the book, its author, and its message. This process raises questions. The first question is how to divide the book

into chapters and a logical progression. The original Hebrew text of Joel has four chapters, while the English translations for some reason follow the lead of the Latin Vulgate, placing Joel 2:28–32 at the end of chapter two rather than as a separate chapter as in the Hebrew text.

Joel – Authenticity and Authorship

The second question of Joel is that of unity. Many scholars want to find several editors adding material to the original book. These Bible students cannot see any literary, historical, or theological connection between Joel 1:1 to 2:27 and 2:28 to 3:21. Bible scholar and commentator Douglass Stuart concludes his introduction to Joel by reporting: "At present, then, virtually no consensus can be claimed for scholarship on Joel, whether as to date, or unity, or theological perspective, or even the literalness of the imagery." That is a lot of frustration...

However, in that same commentary Stuart strongly sees the book of Joel as a significant collection of images used to describe the theological teaching about the **Day of the Lord** in not only a "present-day perspective", but a "yet to come" aspect as well. The collection of Joel's images were drawn from the experiences with locust invasions, natural disasters, and military invasion. One man by God, named as Joel in the text, collected the imagery, listened to God, and wrote the poetry and prophecy. Joel passionately impressed on his audience the horror as well as the hope connected with facing the **Day of the Lord**.

I personally connect with Stuart's conclusion at the beginning of his introduction: "Joel shares its simple woe-then-well overall structure with a majority of the prophetic books....Joel is also somewhat more tightly organized than many of the prophetic books, with such a degree of thematic and vocabulary linkage among its many parts, a logical progression from one part to the next, that it is reasonable to conclude that Joel's message was originally composed and delivered either at one time or in a relatively short span of time - perhaps a week or a month."

Joel – The Time and Place

That said, finding where that one day, week, or month lay in human history is virtually impossible. As Old Testament scholars like at Garrett

Theological Seminary note:

Probably no book of the Bible has had a wider range of dates assigned to it. Scholarly opinions for the date of Joel range from the early monarchy to the late post-exilic period, although the early post-exilic probably is the "most popular opinion today for the date of composition.

Arguments for any date are subject to great debate. The book does not refer to the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Failure to mention any of the kings of Judah, on the other hand, may be accidental and unimportant, though lack of their inclusion in the introductory title of 1:1 is significant.

Reference to priests and elders (Joel 1:9,13–14) without reference to a king could also be important except for the fact that the subject of the particular text is ritual matters over which the priests presided and the call

is to elders as representatives of the citizens of the land. The literary context, not the historical context, excludes the king.

Reference to God's people scattered among the nations (Joel 3:2) does not necessarily refer to the major exile of 586 B.C. It could just as well speak of the Northern Kingdom's fall in 721 or the Assyrian army's victories between 713 and 701. The call for the entire population to gather for a fast in Jerusalem (Joel 1:14) is literary hyperbole. The elders of the various villages would most likely have represented the rural citizens. This does not point to a post-exilic moment when Judah was so depopulated that everyone could be expected to go to Jerusalem. That Judah's population was ever that small is debatable.

Joel's familiarity with the prophetic language used by Obadiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Isaiah, or other prophets may reflect a prophetic tradition of using set phrases familiar to the audience to catch their attention and remind them that such language was the work of the prophets and should not be easily dismissed.

Appearance of Greeks (Joel 3:6) does not have to mirror the power of Alexander the Great or of slightly earlier Greek intrusions into the Middle East. Rather, Greek traders had long worked with Phoenician counterparts to control the trade routes of the Mediterranean area and beyond.

Joel's references to Edom, Egypt, Philistines, and Phoenicians is no help, since they had been Israel's opponents since the time of the wilderness

wandering and conquest. Even linguistic traits such as language that is related to Aramaic do not point to nearly as late a date as earlier scholars were inclined to believe. Aramaic language exercised influence in the Middle East at least from the time of the Assyrian domination. After a meticulous study of all examples of words or phrases that might depend on the Aramaic language, G. W. Ahlström concluded "It must be clear that many of the words and phrases having been used as arguments for a late date are not late at all."

The conclusion Garrett's commentary: "Clear pointers to the date of Joel are few and far between. Any suggested time frame for the book should be tentative, and the interpretation of the book should not depend upon a hypothetical historical setting." Garrett points to a date in the 600s B.C. This may be correct, but the description of restoring the fortunes of Jerusalem and gathering the people from the nations (Joel 3:1–3) and looting the temple seems to point to a major catastrophe in Judah's history, either that of 701 or one of the early Babylonian incursions into Judah between 609 and 587 before the total destruction of the temple. In Joel the temple appears still to be standing and functioning.

Joel - The Message and Meaning

Joel concentrates on one theme—**The Day of the Lord**. He reveals several variations - past present and future in that one theme. The day is **past**, being experienced in a plague of locusts and in a natural drought and famine. The day is **current** or imminent, carried out by an enemy or military force. The day is **future**: immediately in the salvation of Jerusalem from

current problems; long-range in the giving of the Spirit of God on all people and the deliverance of all who call on the name of the Lord; and ultimate in the eternal holiness of Jerusalem, protected from its enemies, flowing with fertility, lived in obedience to the one true covenant God, and enabled by God's pardon of Israel's guilt.

Joel bases his **Day of the Lord** theology on a theme deeply rooted in Israel's life with God—covenant. As Deuteronomy 28 warned of curses on those who disobeyed God's covenant, so Joel's **Day of the Lord** fulfilled those curses, first for disobedient Israel and then for their unrighteous enemies. As the covenant introduced God with the words "I am the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:1), so Joel's ultimate hope was for Israel to know and confess that "I, the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:5) live in Jerusalem. The nature of this God revealed in the covenant renewal (Exodus 34:6–7) gave Joel hope that the Lord would not totally destroy a people who turned to him in repentance (Joel 2:13–14).

Joel's "**The Day of the Lord**" theme, is rooted in covenant theology, and has consequences far beyond the theological classroom and into the lives of not only the Jews but also in the everyday lives of believers and followers of Christ as well. Because of these consequences both groups must do more than learn about the nature of their covenant and the God of their covenant. Israel as must learn once again what it means to be in covenant with God - but the same holds true for us as Christian believers, or followers of Jesus. Both groups (Jews and Christians) must embrace two simple but profound themes:

One - We must own and acknowledge our nature to sin, coming to God through Christ Jesus the Messiah, in true repentance.

Two - We must realize that God is now in control.

Complacency in this will not satisfy God - it never has and never will.

Tender and open hearts, yes - complacency no. However, such a process is not a human mechanism to control God and ensure the results that we humans want when we want them. God is not Santa, a Genie, or someone's Grandpa!!

“Repentance is not only contrition and redirection, but in a bigger sense surrender to God's will, God's way, God's time. This is an idea that needs re-introduction to the arrogant hearts of our common culture.”

Repentance confesses the sin of trying to take control of our world, and repentance recognizes the sovereignty of God - that the He has been, is, and will always be in control. Such rare and spiritually mature repentance looks to God for both pardon and blessing, but it recognizes that it cannot demand or abuse such. Only the Lord knows when blessing and pardon will come.

When these do come, a new reality comes with them. God's Spirit is poured on all nations. Everyone has opportunity to call on the name of the Lord and be delivered. This is a new type of spiritual reality never before

experienced on earth. This reality was manifest at Pentecost in the Book of Acts (2:1–4), but it still awaits ultimate consummation.

Joel - What's the Point?

Having warned his people of all the horrors and terrors that accompany the Day of the Lord, Joel finally pointed them forward to the great hope of the ultimate day. Here he joined all the prophets in pointing to God's mysterious will to make himself known to the world and to restore justice, holiness, and true worship to his creation. The end is not put on a timetable. It is not described in clear details that allow close observers of nature and history to recognize its entrance into its historical place. It is not separated into parts or ages in which some who participate are here and others are there. Joel sets out a promise: God has a plan to protect, preserve, and bring praise to Jerusalem while bringing just punishment upon his enemies.

Recognize the call is not a pure separation of Jew and Gentile. The Spirit is promised to all people, and the call for deliverance is not limited to Jews. The central emphasis, however, remains on the rescue of Judah and Jerusalem from their enemies, the presence of the holy God in his holy residence with his holy people, and the gift of pardon from guilt for a Jerusalem inhabited by his people and by the Lord forever.

And for us today... it's quite obvious where we fit - we fit in Christ Jesus. He is our fit. For all non-Jews Christ Jesus is our sole hope and access to God. Joel's "**Day of the Lord**" is more relevant for us now than at any other

point in the history of mankind - today is the day of salvation. The point is that we too need a Savior. We need hope as we live in a day where we see the moral values, biblical ideas and beliefs that we have held as right and true seem destined to collapse and vanish. The point is that as horrible as that may sound it might be the hopeful signal of all that Joel prophesied...

Joel 2:30-32

And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

7.1.18 – 7.8.18

Joel - The Imminent Day of the Lord

Joel 2:1-27

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.

Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale. Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief.

The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The Lord utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it?

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a by-word among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. The Lord answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am

sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.

"I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things.

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

"Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before.

"The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.

"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the

midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Messaging and Context

A great deal of Joel's relevancy to us is contained in the idea and understanding of the phrase - **"The Day of the Lord."** I believe that Joel's **"Day of the Lord"** as a prophetic call is more relevant for us now than at any other point in the history of mankind - today is the day of salvation - tomorrow is not guaranteed. But for us to gain better understanding, we might need to take a closer look. To begin I would like to propose that Joel's context for his message to Jerusalem regarding and imminent **Day of the Lord** was three-dimensional in two very significant ways:

Dimensions of Time - Past, Present, Future (because the day belongs to God)

Dimensions of Response - Gathering, Worship, Battle (because these are the biblical and appropriate responses to the call of God)

The Day of the Lord for Israel or for us is never a one-time singular event or happening. For example; Judgment Day, Armageddon, or The Return of Christ - events. Joel's **Day of the Lord** could describe any day, any moment, that God would so choose to initiate or effect His Will, His Word, or His Ways into the lives of any people in covenant or called by His Name.

That could be past, present, future or, all three intersecting together. It could be judgment, reckoning, deliverance, worship or salvation. It could be intended corporately or personally. His Day - His Say - His Way. **The Day of the Lord.** Joel saw it coming!

Once he had gotten Jerusalem's attention with the detailed images of imminent terror and doom, Joel began to immediately prepare them for that Day (that is what prophets, pastors, teachers, leaders do). History confirms that Joel was describing through a prophetic word of knowledge an actual Assyrian invasion that took place during the reign of King Hezekiah, in 701 B.C. (check out Isaiah 36-37). This invasion really happened - and Joel told all Jerusalem it would, before it did. True to His word, God allowed the Assyrians to ravage most of the land of both northern and southern kingdoms, but He miraculously chose to deliver Jerusalem from the devastation. Here is a very accurate biblical account of what Joel did and said in chapter two that makes his words relative to us today. After the shofars were blown to give purposes for gathering there were three main instructions Joel gave the people of Jerusalem.

Blow the Trumpet! (Joel 2:1-11)

This was real call to war, so Joel commanded the watch-men to blow their trumpets (shofars), and warn the people (Teruah). The Jews used trumpets to call assemblies, announce special events and observances, mark various forms of worship or religious festivals, and finally warn the people that war had been declared (Numbers 10; Jeremiah 4:5; 6:1; Hosea 5:8). In this case, they blew the trumpet to announce war (Teruah) and to

call for a fast and prayer (Shevarim Joel 2:15). Their weapons against the invading enemy would be repentance and prayer; the Lord would fight for them.

Twice in this passage. Joel tells us that the invasion would signal a devastating "Day of the Lord" (verses 1 and 11), in this context, a very intentional period of divine retribution - planned, directed and enforced by God alone. "The Lord thunders at the head of His army" (verse 11). It was God who brought the locusts of the land, and it was God would allow the Assyrians to invade the land (Isaiah 7:17-25; 8:7). He would permit them to ravage Judah just as the locusts had done, only now these Assyrians would not be mere images and words, they would truly terrorize and brutally kill people.

Isaiah 10:5-6

"Woe to Assyria, the rod of Sly anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation ... to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like mire in the streets."

In his graphic account of the invading army, Joel sees them coming in great hordes, "like dawn spreading across the mountains" (Joel 2:2). Once again, he uses the locusts to describe the soldiers. Just as the locusts had destroyed everything edible before them, so the army would use a "scorched earth policy" and devastate the towns and the land (Isaiah 36:10; 37:11-13). Everything destroyed. Joel also makes it clear that the

Lord will be in charge of this invasion; this is His army fulfilling His Word (Joel 2:11). God can use even heathen nations to accomplish His purposes on this earth (Isaiah 10:5-7; Jeremiah 25:9). The awesome cosmic disturbances described in Joel 2:10 are Joel's way saying... The Day of the Lord - His day, His say, His way.

Rend Your Hearts! (Joel 2:12-17)

Once again, Joel called for a solemn assembly where God's people would repent of their sins and seek the Lord's help. The nation didn't know when this invasion would occur, so the important thing was for them to turn to the Lord now. But they must be sincere. It's easy to participate in a religious ceremony, tear your garments, and lament. Its altogether different to confess your sins in humility and bring to God a repentant heart.

Matthew 15:8-9

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Psalms 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart these, O God, You will not despise.

Understanding who God is (His character) usually leads the genuine believer to repent, redirect, and return to the Lord. Knowing that God is

indeed "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Joel 2:13) should surely to motivate us to seek and to worship Him. This best (politically incorrect) biblical description of the attributes of God goes back to Moses' meeting with the Lord on Mt. Sinai, while interceding for the sinful nation of Israel.

Exodus 34:6-7

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

Knowing that God was the motivation and courage Joel needed to call all of Jerusalem together to prepare for war by first making their hearts right. Verses 15-17 - "But all the people must assemble and then turn to the Lord." This call included everyone: elders and children, nursing babies and priests, and even the newlyweds who were not supposed to be disturbed during their first year of marriage, not even because of a war. Joel even gave them a prayer to use.

Joel 2:17

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not

your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

This prayer gives two reasons why God should deliver them:

1. Israel's covenant privileges as God's heritage.
2. The glory of God's name and reputation before the other nations.

These are God's chosen people. "The Jews" - God's treasure, heritage, the very people to which He gave His laws, His covenant, the temple, the priesthood, designated land, and the promise that their offspring would bless the whole world (Genesis 12:1-3; Romans 9:1-5). Yet, here they were (one more time) blowing their trumpets and rending their hearts, pleading for the mercy of God.

What they should have been doing is giving witness to the other nations that their great and mighty God was the one and the only true God. They could have pointed to their blessings, to their abundance, and to the favor of God over their lands and labor, and their families and faith. How could God be glorified and worshipped if His people were self-destructive, self-focused, and defeated? Even the pagans could sarcastically ask, "Where is your God?" The nation had to choose between revival (getting right with God) and reproach (robbing the God of glory). Sound familiar? They chose humility, repentance, and renewed faithfulness to God.

Believe God's Promises! (Joel 2:18-27)

Joel now looks beyond the invasion to the time when God would heal His land and restore his blessings to His people. Just as He blew the locusts into the depths of the Dead and Mediterranean Sea's (eastern and western seas), so He could drive the invading army out of the land. In one night, God killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and the great Sennacherib went home a defeated king (Isaiah 37:36-38). That gives new meaning the term - night, night, sleep tight. The question once more arises for these people. How can you doubt a God capable of this?

Some Bible scholars believe that Psalm 126 grew out of this event, as it describes a sudden and surprising deliverance that startled the nation. (Judah's return from Babylonian Captivity was neither sudden nor surprising.) "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (verse 3) is echoed in Joel 2:21, "Be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things." Both Joel 2:23-27 and Psalm 126:5-6 describe the restoration of the ravaged earth and the return of the harvests. This fulfilled what Isaiah promised to King Hezekiah (Isaiah 37:30).

Without the former rain (March-April) and the latter rain (October-November), the land could not bear its crops: and one visual and practical way God blessed or disciplined His people was to pour down or shut off the rain (Deuteronomy 11:13-17). But the Lord promised to give such bumper crops that the harvest would more than compensate for all the people lost during the locust plague and the drought. "I will repay you for

the years the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25) is a word of promise to all who return to the Lord with sincere and broken hearts.

One of my favorite Charles Spurgeon quotes... "You cannot have back your time, but there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned... It is a pity that they should have been locust-eaten by your folly and negligence; but if they have been so, be not hope-less concerning them."

And why will God do this for His undeserving people? So that they will praise His name and never again be shamed or ashamed before the heathen, the atheist, or the anti-christ antagonist.

Joel 2:27

"Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other, never again will my people be shamed."

No, chapter two of Joel was definitely not written to us - but it is, unmistakably for us. As never before our lands, our people, our nation, today needs hope and healing. We are polluted and diluted, we are hostile, hateful, and hurtful, we are disenfranchised and marginalized, we are delusional and unconstitutional - and yet we are free and we are God's people - called by His name, bought with a price, chosen and included, redeemed and not rejected. As our "Day of the Lord" fast approaches, we

can blow the trumpets, sound the alarm, call a worship gathering and claim God's promises because "we too" are His people.

2 Chronicles 7:13-15

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

7.22.18 Joel - The Day of the Lord

God Pours Out His Spirit: Chapter 2:28-32

Review:

- The Lord disciplined the people by sending a locust plague which destroyed the land.
- The locust invasion was a warning that the nation was about to experience God's judgment by way of an invading army.
- Only national repentance would stop the coming discipline.
- The nation did repent, God did relent and brought rain and crops.
- God also promised future judgment on the nations and Israel, but He would save those who called on Him.
- After the final judgment, He would set up His kingdom and dwell in Jerusalem forever and there would be peace and prosperity.

Application:

- We don't know what the sins of the people were. Joel does not elaborate. So we can't really look at the book, and see their sins and evaluate our lives to see if we are doing the same things.
- We can see that God does not ignore sin - it always has consequences.
- We see that God is gracious and patient and may relent if we repent.
- We do know that the repentance that Joel called for was internal, heartfelt repentance, not just sociological reform. So we need to be sure our repentance is genuine.

- Joel also gives us an assurance that God does have a future for His people and the book reaffirms our concept of a literal future tribulation when God will judge the nations, and restore his people to the land.
- Finally, I think the book shows that God is in control - not this world or the men and women who occupy it.

Joel 2:28-32

And it shall come to pass afterward, that 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 servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

How could God reach and teach nation of people who had been so consistently defiant and rebellious? The answer is that He would change their heart by the outpouring of His Spirit. First, He would do this by bringing the fields back to normal with the rain - the rain represented the presence, favor, and power of His Spirit. As grace given Christians, we have some difficulty understanding this passage because we

automatically read our New Testament (New Covenant) experience of the Holy Spirit into the Old Testament experience of the Jewish people. It is not the same - same God, same Spirit, different covenant. Remember the Old Testament is a pre-Pentecost old covenant book. These verses from Joel would become one of the main prophecies used to help the church of Jesus understand Pentecost, but they could use them only because they had experienced a fulfillment of His promise through the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17–21). In the context of Joel's message and mission we have to see how Joel and his people (Jerusalem Jews) would have understood this word before we can truly place it into our present day Holy Spirit experience.

Let's start with how the Old Testament uses the term **ruach**. **Ruach** is used to refer to wind, breath, and empowerment, or in other words the Spirit of God in a person's life. In Joel's day **ruach** moved the people forward - raising up God's people to lead in the military, political, and prophetic roles, assignments and positions of authority. The out pouring of the Spirit of God leads people to obey the expectations of their covenant with Him, and moves them forward in repentance to change their heart and then to a new leadership and new obedience.

Joel used traditional language for the **ruach** of God (helping and empowering) his people to a new promise—a promise not confined to only leaders, but to include all of God's people (young and old - male and female). No longer would a person have to go to prophets or priests to determine God's message. Everyone would know God's revelation. No

longer could an elder or older generation have control or monopoly on wisdom and the insight of God's Spirit. The younger generation had access to God's visions. No longer could men exclude women because sons and daughters alike would receive God's visions.

The economically advantaged no longer had reason to claim a spiritual advantage or control. Even the working class (servants) would receive God's Spirit of revelation and power. God long term plan through Joel's prophecy was for all people to have access to His will, to know His plan, and to have the choice to obey or disobey. Here is a central biblical text for God's mission for the world.

In this closing segment of Joel's prophecy from chapter two, God continues His response to the repentance of His people with the promises of deliverance. This reveals once again (not just to Joel's Jews) who God is - Repentance and humility will bring deliverance and salvation. Most scholars believe however that these verses (specifically 28) actually refer to a future deliverance - while others see it as time inclusive - age to age. Seven hundred years later on the Day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter stands up to preach the gospel to unbelieving Jews from all over the world and he quotes this promise from Joel's prophecy in Acts.

Acts 2:21 27

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all

flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Acts 2:17 the apostle Peter quotes Joel 2:28. There have been several views on what this means:

- Some have taught that the prophecy in Joel 2:28 was totally fulfilled at Pentecost, but that is not true because they did not have all the necessary ingredients. They were missing signs, wonders, dreams and visions. Some say the sun being darkened at crucifixion was the sign and wonder, but that happened almost two months before Pentecost. There really was nothing to equal the blood, fire and columns of smoke in Joel 2:30.
- Some spread the fulfillment over the church age and think that the early rains and latter rains in Joel 2:23 refer to the Holy Spirit being poured out at Pentecost and later visions, speaking in tongues, etc. being given in our time. I think that is a stretch - just trying to find scriptural justification for charismatic expressions of the gifts of the Spirit. The rain

in Joel refers to precipitation that actually fell in Joel's time. I do not believe this refers to the Holy Spirit.

- Others think that there was a 9th century fulfillment - in Joel's day. Then there was an application/fulfillment in Peter's day and there will still be a future fulfillment. But Peter didn't say this is "like" what Joel said. He said this "is" what Joel said.
- Another view is what we might call the Potential View. It could have happened in Peter's day but it didn't. But Peter thought it would. The signs he mentioned by Jesus could have been seen as a precursor to the cataclysmic signs mentioned in Joel. All the disciples thought this. Compare Acts 1:6-7. Jesus did not tell them they were wrong to think that the kingdom would be set up, because it was going to be. He just told them it was not for them to know the time. They still didn't know there was going to be a church age.

I have some personal thoughts and convictions, I feel comfortable enough to share. If we look at Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19.

Isaiah 61:1-2

**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

**to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;**

Luke 4:16-21

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus shows that only the first part of Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled at the first advent. I think the same thing is happening in Joel 2:28-32. Verses 28-29 happened at Pentecost. Verses 30-32 will happen in the future during the tribulation. God promises in verse 32 that whoever calls on him during this terrible time (which I think is the Tribulation) will be saved.

Look back to Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Ezekiel 36:25-29

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Notice also that the prophet says he will remove **the heart of stone** (Ten Commandments - law) from your flesh and give the Spirit to cause us to walk in those statutes instead.

Galatians 5:16-19

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The statutes of the law are not gone, there is just a new way of following and fulfilling them. Now they are followed and fulfilled in and through Christ Jesus - the grace and forgiveness of sin through His service, His

sacrifice, His resurrection, and His promise to return for all who believe in Him.

Based on those things, I believe that Joel 2:28-29 happened at Pentecost, but Joel 2:30-3:21 will happen in our future. Stay tuned!!!

7.29.18 Joel - The Day of the Lord

Greater Things Yet to Come: Chapter 3:1-21

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it. "What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far away, for the Lord has spoken.

Proclaim this among the nations: Consecrate for war; stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up.

Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior."

Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord.

Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it. And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim.

Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion.

Joel's final chapter looks to the future restoration and prosperity of Judah, and the punishing repayment of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat for what they did to God's people. This sets up the *Day of the Lord* as a day of decision, and as the day when God reestablishes Jerusalem at the center of His covenant people forever. Worthy to note, that the day of decision does not always mean a time where our decisions matter - it's usually the opposite that is true. The Day of the Lord most often represents a day in which it is only God's decisions that now matter. However, as we read this chapter you can't help but notice that most of these things that have not yet happened. These are not small or insignificant things, but rather, they are great big things! Only things that God can and has promised to do - greater things, greater things yet to come.

Joel faced a world in which the terrorists had won. His country and his people were devastated. God told him not to worry, but to continue to trust Him. Joel warned of an imminent Day of the Lord, but also foretold of a coming Day of the Lord was at hand, a day that would be a day of decision. So Joel gives this final summary of his message for God's

people. His focus is on now the future, not the present. He looks to the time when *"the Lord will be living in Zion."* That can happen because of God's pardon (Messiah). In his grace and love and to fulfill all his promises, God will find all the sins he has not pardoned and he will pardon them. This Day of the Lord will bring salvation to God's people—a salvation marked by his eternal presence with them. Only made possible by God's mercy, pardon and forgiveness.

The final Day of the Lord will bring victory and pardon for God's people, but that day of final decision will also bring lasting judgment on the enemies of God's people. God will live in Zion among his people.

As we said earlier, the day of the Lord always demands a decision. But this time the decisions would be the final Day of the Lord (in this case, the last judgment).

Promised Judgment of Israel's Enemies and the Deliverance and Prosperity of the Land (3:1-21)

- God has not restored the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem (3:1).
- He has not judged all the nations (3:2).
- Jerusalem is certainly not holy today (they are still looking for the Messiah) and with all the political chaos in Jerusalem today, there is no way anyone could think 3:17 has been fulfilled. When it says "strangers will pass through no more" it means there will be no more invasions on Jerusalem. Just as recently as this year there have

been bombings and rocket attacks claimed by terrorist Palestinian and Hamas groups, so this certainly has not been fulfilled.

- The reference to *beating plowshares into swords* implies that there is a peace in the land that is temporary and they will resort back to war. This sounds to me like the peace in the first half of the tribulation which is broken by the *man of sin* in the middle of the tribulation (3:10).
- The millennial kingdom introduced and described to a global audience. It will be a utopia. There is also another promise to the Jews. It says, "Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem for all generations." (3:20-21)

With these promises and more to come we should be certain of a few important things...

- There is a Day of the Lord yet to come.
- That Day of the Lord will center around His unfulfilled promises to the Jewish people.
- All believers and followers of Jesus will be included in the fulfillment of those promises.
- For those who are in Christ Jesus, we know that we are fully prepared for the great and mighty Day of the Lord.
- The Day of the Lord does not mean doom and disaster for us.

- God has a plan for world history in which he rewards his faithful people and judges those who disobey him and mistreat his people.
- God is the judge of every nation and every person - whether they believe in Him or not.
- God will protect his people when the Day of the Lord comes.
- We are assured in Christ that greater things are yet to come.