



## Joel 2:28-32

# The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Joel, a Hebrew prophet in 835 B. C. describes a devastating locust plague in detail. You can hear the swarms of locust moving through the vineyards in 1:4, 7. It is against such a devastating disaster of swarming, crop-eating locusts that Judah experienced in Joel's day that makes the promise of the outpouring of God's Spirit so remarkable. Three thousand years later we receive Joel's words eagerly because we come to the same God of grace with hearts of repentance and faith.

Joel proclaims an even profounder message of the coming Day of Yahweh. It will be a sudden conclusion to human history and brings all humanity to the point of divine judgment. If we allow the focus to shift from Joel's locust's plague to our morally and spiritually depraved day we see tremendous relevance of this prophetic message. Salvation and destruction go hand in hand. The Day of the LORD is a day of salvation as well as a day of judgment.

The opening chapter speaks of desolation because of Judah's sins.

## THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DESOLATION (1:1-2:17)

Locust swarms by the millions had invaded Judah and have totally destroyed the land (1:2-7). Therefore the prophet issues an urgent call for national day of prayer (vv. 13-20). The prophet sees the calamity as the hand of God. He recognizes the sovereign hand of God behind the plagues and His divine deliverance (v. 15). Joel calls the people to repentance (v. 13). He writes in 1:4, 7,

What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;  
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;  
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten. . . .  
It has made my vine a waste  
And my fig tree splinters.  
It has stripped them bare and cast *them* away;  
Their branches have become white.

John D. Whiting wrote an article describing a locust plague in Palestine in the December 1915, issue of *National Geographic*. "Thus Joel, writing some seven or eight hundred years B. C., begins his description of a locust plague. We marvel how this ancient writer could have given so graphic and true a description of a devastation caused by locusts in so condensed form." (p. 511). In 1915 the first swarms of adult locusts appeared in March, coming from the northeast, going toward southwest in such "thick clouds as to obscure the sun for the time being" (p. 513). The females, about two and one-half to three inches long, at once began to lay their eggs, sinking a hole about four inches deep into the hard soil and depositing about 100 eggs. "It is

to lay their eggs, sinking a hole about four inches deep into the hard soil and depositing about 100 eggs. "It is estimated by competent authorities that as many as 65,000 to 75,000 locust eggs are concentrated in a square meter of soil" (pp. 516, 521).

In 1915 the fully developed flying locusts appeared about June 10 and at once began to complete the destruction begun in the earlier stages. They attacked the olive trees, whose tough, bitter leaves had not been to the liking of the creepers. Food becoming scarcer, both creeping and flying locusts attacked the olive trees, and between the two they stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark. Likewise, every variety of tree was attacked. . . Of the cacti they ate away layer after layer over the whole surface, giving the leaves the effect of having been jack-planed." (p. 542). The full-grown locusts had cleaned up every bit of vegetation.

Even in the year 2000 A.D. scientists tell us if the locusts are not destroyed or contained shortly after they hatch and once the swarm has formed control efforts are minimal. Plagues continue as long as climatic conditions favor the large hatches. One such swarm reached across the Red Sea and was estimated to have covered 2000 square miles. A swarm can contain up to 120 million per mile.

Joel tells us though God is gracious and slow to anger the current locust plague is the backdrop of a future desolation (2:1-11). The Day of the LORD is coming and is a major theme of Joel (2:1, 11, 25). God intervenes in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 3:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3). It will be a day when all moral accounts will be settled: (1) For the wicked it is a day of judgment and punishment, but (2) For the faithful it is a day of glory, reward, salvation and vindication of the righteous. However, there is more to his message because it is also illustrative in that a historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord. It is an eschatological day of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the Second Coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32) and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9).

Therefore the prophet issues a call to personal repentance (vv. 12-14, and a day of national repentance (vv. 15-17). On this historic occasion the people repent and God intervenes and saves Judah.

### **THE DELIVERANCE OF JUDAH (2:18-3:21)**

God is faithful to His promises (vv. 25-27). In the context of this call to personal and national repentance the prophet lifts his spiritual sight and sees with his prophetic lenses another day and a greater promise for his people. It is something unheard of in the Old Testament. The signs of the dawning of judgment are appended to the outpouring of the Spirit of God, writes Keil.

Again, the prophet sees beyond the local repentance and revival of the nation to a future day when the nation will receive supernatural blessings (2:28-3:5)

Joel declares in the days of the Messiah the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, and not just a few individuals for specific assignments. The special gifts of the Spirit were given only to certain individual Israelites. However, in the age of grace the gifts of the Spirit will be poured out on all mankind (Acts 2:8-11, 39, 41; 10:34-47; 11:20, 21; 15:7-12). The all men refers to all believers, male and female, slave and free, youth and old, irrespective of age or sex, or social standing. Joel declares that God will pour out His Spirit in abundant measure, an overflowing supply. It is an ever-renewed outpouring on generation after generation. It will be the age of the Spirit.

Joel says in verses 28-29:

It will come about after this  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
Your young men will see visions.  
Even on the male and female servants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

To pour out signifies communication in rich abundance, like a rainfall or waterfall. It is true the Spirit of God is the only inward bond He has with His people, but the outpouring in abundance with the gift of the Holy Spirit was confined to the few whom God chose and endowed as prophets. This limitation was to cease in the future. Moses expressed his desire that all the people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them (Num. 11:29).

The sporadic communication of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament cannot be regarded as the outpourings of the Spirit of God. Keil observes, This first took place when Christ Jesus the Son of God had completed the work of redemption, i.e., on the first feast of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The outpouring of the Spirit shall continue until the fullness of the Gentiles shall enter the kingdom of God. This was fulfilled along with Joel's prophecy in the future.

The promise made in Joel is far greater than anything experienced under the law. The emphasis is on the greatness of this fresh outpouring of the Spirit. As Calvin stressed, it does not mean merely to give in drops, but to pour out in great abundance. But God did not pour out the Holy Spirit so abundantly or copiously under the law, as He has since the manifestation of Christ. ”

The greatest evidence as to where Jesus Christ is at the present time is the reality of Pentecost. We know that Jesus has risen from the dead, ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us because He sent the Holy Spirit just as He promised. The Holy Spirit came just as He promised on the day of Pentecost; therefore, Jesus is in heaven. The last days in Acts 2:17 had arrived. They began with Christ's first advent and will continue until the second. The fulfillment of this prophecy on the day of Pentecost does not forbid other fulfillments.

The apostle Peter quotes the whole passage in Joel as fulfillment at Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21. Our understanding of Joel and Peter's interpretation must be with constant vigilance with what the Holy Spirit has taught by the prophets and apostles (1 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 2:10-13).

The apostle Paul has given us an infallible explanation and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out on the 120 believers, on the day of Pentecost, that was the very thing which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. That was the gift of the Spirit who came as the accomplishment of the promise of the

by the prophet Joel. That was the gift of the Spirit who came as the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. The outstanding characteristic of the prophets of the Messianic times such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit without any limitations. Ancient rabbis expected the fulfillment to take place in the future on the advent of the Messiah.

Not a single case occurs in the whole Old Testament of a slave receiving the gift of prophecy, observed Keil. Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit on slaves is something very extraordinary. The Jewish community did not expect it.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the 120 believers on the Day of Pentecost is not the fulfillment predicted of such an outpouring upon all flesh. It is the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

### ***Possession of the Spirit is down payment of every believer.***

In the Old Testament we often read of the Holy Spirit coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and the prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream, as was promised with an eye to gospel times. Peter tells us that this came about in the last days, the days of the Messiah. The blessing is not just for Jewish people, but also for Gentiles. The Spirit shall be poured out on all flesh. In Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Rom. 10:11-13). In Christ there is neither bond nor free (Gal. 3:28). I doubt if Peter understood the full implication of this until the Spirit taught him at the home of Cornelius and his friends who were Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). The Holy Spirit now works in the hearts of men bringing conviction of sin, righteousness, unbelief and the judgment of God. He works in unbeliever's hearts to bring them to an understanding of God's salvation offered through the death of Jesus Christ. And when a person is born again He comes to live within the person and the believer's body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit.

If Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Fruit is the mark of authentic believers. You will know them by their fruits. To what extent are we manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our daily life? God expects the believer to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Jn. 15:1-12).

Christ is seen as the One who will give the Holy Spirit (2:28; Jn. 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), who judges the nations (3:2, 12) and who is the refuge and stronghold of Israel (3:16).

### ***The coming Day of Yahweh***

Joel pictures the gathering of all nations for judgment. It will be a time of judgment that will come upon all nations after the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. The later prophets, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Ezekiel and Malachi, quote him and develop even further this theme. This gathering of the nations can be completed only by Yahweh. It will be at a time when the nations are in a tumult against Israel. This gathering will come at a time when God will miraculously intervene in a war against Judah and Jerusalem. God will use the events to purify Jerusalem and His people.

Keil and Delitzsch note, It will be the last decisive judgment, in which all the single judgments find their end. These wonders are extraordinary and marvelous natural phenomena. They call to mind the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:17; 9:24).

Joel 2:30-32 describes such a future scenario:

I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,  
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.  
The sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood  
Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.  
And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord  
Will be delivered;  
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
There will be those who escape,  
As the Lord has said,  
Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Joel describes wonders and signs in the world of nature. Peter quotes Joel saying, " And I will grant wonders in the sky above And signs on the earth below, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come" (Acts 2:19-20, NASB95). Perhaps he had in mind the events just fifty days earlier when the people of Jerusalem has seen the sun turn into darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus.

Compare the Day of the LORD in Joel in 2:30-32; 3:1-21 with the words of Jesus in Matt. 24:31; 25:40, 45, and John in Revelation 16:14; 19:14; 14:18-19. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming which will be ushered in with wonders in heaven and hearth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood. It will be completely fulfilled in the Day of Judgment at the end of time. The judgments of God will come upon a sinful world. As Joel declares it will be a summons to judgment (3:1-17) and result in the great consummation (vv. 18-21). The LORD God reigns. He is sovereign over the universe. Judgment of the nations goes hand in hand with the outpouring of the Spirit.

### *Only way of escape*

However, let us ever keep in mind that there is a way of escape from the wrath to come. How does God restore the years the locust have eaten? There is only one way and that is through Jesus Christ the Messiah. He offers forgiveness and the indwelling of His Spirit in everyone who will call upon His name in repentance and faith. God will deliver you from the Day if you will repent today and believe on Christ as your savior. The apostle Peter brought his greatest message to a close with this invitation in Acts 2:36-39.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ —this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? Peter *said* to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. ”

Calling upon the name of the Lord is a confession of the mouth and expression of the heart as in Romans 10:9-10, 13. It is only those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who will receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God. None are saved but those who call upon His name for salvation (Acts 4:12).

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