

V. Joel in Biblical Perspective
A Minor Prophet with a Major Message
“Divine Judgment and the Single Escape Route”
Joel 2:28–32
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Jehovah is God. This is a prophecy that gives us information of what God does when His people whom He has blessed begin to forget Him and forsake Him and how He does not cut them off but how He brings days of discipline from the Lord in order to restore them and redeem them, even so what He does will be replaced by what He will yet do, as He does with Joel. This prophecy is recording a plague sent from God upon His people whom He has blessed but they have forgotten Him, a plague of waves of locusts that actually come joined by three other pieces of this plague – fire, drought and famine. God’s people have been brought under His refining hand of judgment, not a judgment of condemnation but the judgment of redemptive discipline is taking place. When it comes to a promise the promise is this; I will restore what the locusts have eaten. God has a good, benevolent purpose in what He is doing in the discipline of His people for those whom He loves He disciplines.

In the first four studies of Joel we have covered the first two chapters of the book of Joel. We will have two more studies left including this one to finish the book of Joel. In our series of contending and defending the faith what I preach on Sunday morning will tie in with what I preach on Sunday nights so as to take it to another level on Sunday night. It will be tied together in terms of texts and themes. I have chosen Nahum and Joel for our summer series to prepare us for the importance of this matter of God’s people both contending for the faith within the church and defending the faith from the attacks outside church, how we go about that, look at that and why it’s so important.

I want to start this study by going back to the last part of Joel 2 because it’s a pivotal text. There is something you can learn about Scripture as well as prophecy by us going back to take a look at this text because Joel 2:28–32 stands in fulfillment of the hope and desire of the first author of Scripture. Then it now comes about in terms of the prayer of the first author of Scripture who is Moses. Moses is anticipating what Joel 2:28 affirms that later under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Peter affirms at another level of fulfillment. I want you to see this in the text itself. Back in the book of Numbers 11 a very special event is recorded in the lives of God’s people. There are a number of very significant events in the book of Numbers but here is something that is being spoken as God’s people are being delivered and brought out.

Numbers 11:24–30 says [24] *So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent* (the tent of meeting where God’s presence was known). [25] *Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders* (now you have 70 prophets and speak by inspiration of the Spirit). *And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it* (it was only a temporary gift for a temporary moment).

[26] *Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.* [27] *And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”* [28] *And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of*

Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." [29] But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" [30] And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Here is an interesting moment where God brings 70 men together around Moses, this first author of Scripture. In that moment the Spirit of God that rests in the Tent of Meeting that would descend on Moses now descends on the 70 and the result is they begin to prophesy, speak forth the Word of God. As they speak forth the Word of God they come to a conclusion, an ending point and it's through. I'm sure it was an astounding moment for everyone that was there but what seemingly was a momentary blessing that they had to absorb continued on to some degree by two men, now not at the Tent of Meeting but now throughout the camp, who are proclaiming the Word of the Lord and the Spirit of God is upon them. Joshua, being the good executive pastor, he then says 'I have to defend Moses.' He runs up to Moses and says 'Moses you wouldn't believe what is happening out there. There are two men out there taking your place preaching. It wasn't like the 70 but these men are staying at it. Moses you need to stop them.' Moses then responds to Joshua saying "Joshua, are you jealous for me? You don't need to be. Not only can I rejoice that these two men are speaking the Word of God by the power of the Spirit of God but I would that every single one of the Lord's people had the Spirit of God upon them that allowed them to speak forth His Word."

Now fast forward to Joel 2. Remember in Joel 1 this plague of locusts now intensifies with fire, drought and famine and had brought upon them God's redeeming and loving discipline. Then they repented but their repentance wasn't a true repentance for it was a worldly sorrow. They just showed up and tore a few garments and sprinkled a few ashes and God said 'No, I want you to rend your hearts, not just your garments.' Then the book of Joel shows us they did rend their hearts and this time there was a true repentance. God is now restoring them and as He is restoring them He tells them He will restore what the locusts have eaten. Now you will have the grain to bring a grain offering for worship, the water, the land and it will bear fruit. Now you will have the oil to bring the oil in worship. So you'll not only have what you need for sustenance but you'll have what you need to worship Me. I will restore it. After He says that He then makes a comment of what will occur next.

Joel 2:28-32 says [28] *"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. [29] Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. [30] "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. [31] The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. [32] 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.*

Here is a thematic statement. God's work of grace to restore, reconcile and redeem His people is anticipation of a yet more glorious Day of the Lord. Here is what we have learned. This judgment that had come upon His people was a day from the Lord telling them of a day of the Lord that was coming. We also learned that, that day of the Lord when He shall come in judgment had two parts to it. These locusts are a day from the Lord that is a warning across the bow. God is first doing a restoring, redeeming, disciplining work in your life because He loves you but He is also telling us that there is a day of God's judgment that is coming, a Day of the Lord and not just days from the Lord.

As this is clarified we find out that there is not only a Day of the Lord that is coming but there are actually two installments of that Day of the Lord. There is the Day of the Lord when Jesus comes, not to bring judgment but to bear our judgment that we might be saved. It is the day of the Lord and our salvation. Then as He ascends to heaven there will be another Day of the Lord and this one, when He comes again will be not to bear judgment but to bring judgment upon all who have not sought in Him and called upon Him for salvation.

Having mentioned that there is something I want to share with you in a very general way about prophecy when you are studying your Bible. I want to share with you some basic principles that when you study prophecy that you would need to remember in general. When God makes prophetic statements many times the prophecies will have an immediate fulfillment but that's not the final fulfillment. There may yet be another fulfillment and yet another. God will give a prophecy to show you that you need to take this prophecy with sobriety and seriousness for there will be an immediate fulfillment but it's not the final fulfillment. There will be a later fulfillment in Christ, Christological fulfillment. Then once Christ has done that work as Christ's work then proceeds to culmination there will be an eschatological fulfillment. So you not only have an immediate fulfillment, but a Christological fulfillment and then the ultimate fulfillment is what He did in Christ and will bring to consummation as Christ returns. So there is an eschatological fulfillment of what He does at the end times. So that is where we are with this particular statement.

I want to go further into this prophecy and fulfillment in particular. Joel 2:28a says [28] *"And it shall come to pass afterward... afterward what? It will come to pass after the fulfillment of restoring the people. After God has restored what the locusts have eaten and have restored their land and their sustenance, then after that there is something else that is coming that will be associated with the first installment of the day of the Lord and the second installment. Installment number one is the day of the Lord when He comes to bear our judgment. Installment number two is the second coming of the Lord when He comes to bring judgment. So let's see how that fleshes out in the text and in the Scripture.*

Joel 2:28–29 says [28] *"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. [29] Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* This is what Moses wanted to happen. The Spirit will go to all flesh, not just one tribe or one nation but to all the nations of this world. The Spirit of the Lord is going to work universally to all the nations. The Spirit will work vertically as well as horizontally. The Spirit of God will work upon the young, old, male, and female with no ceremonially distinctions between male and female. It will be upon masters and servants, upon the great and the lowly.

His Spirit will produce men and women who are speaking forth the Word of God and they will have My vision. We will find out that they have His complete vision because in these days God is speaking by dreams and visions as He inspires and by working through individual men but there is coming a day when He will no longer speak through visions and dreams for He has finally spoken in His Son, Jesus. You will have, not the preliminary words leading to the final words, but you will have all of My words and you will be able to speak forth all of My words that I have given to you. All men and women shall have My Spirit. They will be able to take My complete word and speak it.

In Joel 2:29 there is a very careful use of the word 'pour' there. The word translated here for pour is usually used in the Old Testament as liquids that are poured out such as when we're

baptized with oil or water. It was the pouring out. He is going to baptize them with His Spirit. My people will come from all the nations; male, female, rich, poor, up and inners and down and outers. They shall then be set free to speak of My glory and My Name. This is something that is happening with the day of the Lord.

He goes on to say in Joel 2:30–31 that in that day [30] *I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. [31] The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.* The pouring out of the Spirit of God is associated with the day of the Lord and also there are these wonders and signs that will surround this event as well.

Joel 2:32 says [32] *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.* Those ‘who call on the name of the Lord’ is very special language in your Bible. I want you to see this so let’s look at Genesis 12. Here is where you see this phrase used – to call upon the name of the Lord, initially, definitively for us as God’s people.

Genesis 12:4–9 says [4] *So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. [5] And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, [6] Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. [7] Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. [8] From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and **called upon the name of the LORD.** [9] And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.*

When you see this phrase ‘call upon the name of the Lord’ in the Bible it is a worship phrase. It is a statement of worship. As we have assembled in this moment it should have been characterized as we were singing, calling upon the name of the Lord – when we were praying, calling upon the name of the Lord. This phrase is worship language that means three things. One, you are confessing your need of Him when you call upon Him. Number two you are committing yourself uniquely to Him. You are sanctifying your commitment to Him, uniquely as your Master and Lord. Thirdly, it is to declare your confidence that the Lord is your Hope. It is a worship statement of confession, commitment, and confidence in the Lord.

In Joel it says when you call upon the name of the Lord you’ll be one of the survivors or you’ll be one of the saved. Who are those who call upon the name of the Lord? Joel 2:32b answers this for us; [32b] *For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape (the saved), as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.* Who is calling who? Are we calling on the Lord or is the Lord calling us? God’s people said, “Yes!”

Early on when I was working in ministry I had the wonderful opportunity to work with the Crusade ministry as a youth pastor. I was at a Methodist Church when I was in college doing their youth ministry for them. I said to the pastor “Is it ok to have a reformed Presbyterian youth group in a Methodist church?” He said “As long as the kids show up, I’m more than happy with it.” At this time we decided to get involved with two campaigns going on then and one was a campaign called “I Found It!” and the other was “Explo ‘72”. I remember when I received the

bumper stickers, handing them out and telling them to put the bumper stickers on that said 'I Found It' but this is the problem when you start studying theology.

Yes, I found it but I didn't find it, I found Him. You might say that 'it' refers to salvation but that's Him. I found Him for that's how I was saved. Not only is that a problem but here is my next problem for I didn't find Him, He found me. Then when He found me I found Him. When I found Him then I received 'it', salvation. The problem is that just doesn't fit on a bumper sticker. You can try all you want to. I found Him because He first found me and when I found Him I got saved. That just won't fit on a bumper sticker.

That is what Joel is talking about here. If you're saved it's because you decided to call upon the Lord and you decided to call upon the Lord because the Lord called you. Do you love Jesus? Absolutely and do you know why you love Jesus? It's because He first loved you. You loved Him because He first loved you. When He loved you He set you free so that now you wanted to love Him because up until then there is none who seek Him, no not one. We don't seek Him, we don't want Him. You might think you wanted Him and that's why you became a Christian but that is because Jesus fixed you as a wanter. When He fixed you as a wanter then you wanted Him. That's why you sing about the amazing grace that God has done in your life.

God called you. What did you do? You called upon the name of the Lord. What is the result? You get saved but it doesn't stop here so let's follow that trajectory to the New Testament. I want to look at two places in the New Testament. One is in Acts 2 but I'll start in Acts 1. Let's look at what Jesus tells them to do. Acts 1:4-5 says [4] *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

Notice there is nothing in your Bible, contrary to what you hear on the television, talking about a baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is a baptism of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't do any baptizing. The Holy Spirit is the One whom you are baptized with but Jesus is the Baptizer. So here Jesus tells them to go to a certain place and He will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and when you have the Holy Spirit two things will happen. One is that you will have power and when you have power you'll have power to prophesy, bear witness of Jesus Christ. You will be My witnesses, where? Everywhere, all flesh in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the world. It is going to go out and forward. After this Jesus gets taken up and now let's look at Acts 2 which occurs ten days later.

Acts 2:1-8 says [1] *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. [2] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. [3] And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. [5] Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. [6] And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. [7] And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? [8] And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"*

Notice that being filled with the Spirit and this wonder that is taking place to draw attention to this step of God's work of redemption has them speaking in languages, not gibberish. They have people represented from all over and all kinds of languages because it's during Pentecost, so all kinds of people have made pilgrimage there. People there are amazed that others not from their area are speaking their language, so it's an actual language, unknown to the

speaker but known to the hearer. In order to bear witness, proclaim and prophesy Christ with the power given through the Spirit. In other words, He is reversing Babel. There are Babel the language is divided. Here at Pentecost the Gospel is uniting to every language in Jesus Christ as they hear them in language that was their own but not the language of the ones who were speaking.

Acts 2:9–21 says [9] *Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [10] Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, [11] both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.*” [12] *And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” [13] But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”*

[14] *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.*

[15] *For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.*

[16] *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: [17] “‘And in the last days it shall be (we have just entered the last days with Joel’s prophecy being fulfilled in the day of the Lord when He had come to bear our judgment, risen in victory and now has poured out His Spirit), 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;*

[18] *even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. [19] And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; [20] the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. [21] And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*

Peter is quoting from this text in Joel 2. Here he is saying it is being fulfilled. In other words, Joel is pointing to something that is going to happen in the future. Peter now tells you he was pointing to what would inaugurate the last days. People ask me whether I think we’re in the last days and I say ‘absolutely.’ When did the last days start? They started the day the Spirit of God was poured out at Pentecost. That began the last days. The prophecy of Joel is fulfilled initially inaugurated at Pentecost but not ultimately. Ultimately it is being fulfilled as the Gospel keeps going to all the nations and all languages and God’s Spirit is being poured out throughout all the world. There it will go from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the utter most parts of the world and in this initial movement as this is taking place it’s opening up their understanding of this.

Note something about who all is there when the Spirit of God is being poured out at Pentecost - [9] *Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [10] Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, [11] both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.* All these people are there and it’s just a little taste of where we are headed when we all arrive with Jesus. People from all the nations and every tribe will be represented. Wasn’t it just lucky that Pentecost happened when all these people showed up from all these places? No, it’s the sovereign hand of God that did this, at this moment with all of this representation of all of these nations and all these languages. Now Joel is fulfilled, inaugurated fulfillment but not ultimate fulfillment for that awaits the coming of Christ and until Christ comes He keeps fulfilling it as the Gospel goes to the utter most parts of the world. Then will come the end when the Gospel has been preached to all the nations and all of His people.

What will accompany this? It is accompanied by, signs and wonders. In the first installment of the day of the Lord see the darkness at Calvary and the sun is covered. It was the time of the blood moon of the Passover. See the columns of smoke. See the earth quaking and the veil being rent in two. See the resurrection and the stone rolled away. See the ascension to glory, taken up in the clouds and vapors of glory before their very eyes. Then hear what Jesus tells us “These will continue...” and then when Jesus comes again I believe these same wonders, even likely in greater intensity will begin to occur.

The day of the Lord’s first installment had all of these cataclysmic signs and wonders around it, even the mighty rushing wind that came in among them, even the appearance of the tongues of fire and then them going out with this amazing miracle where people that didn’t know the language spoke the language to point others to Jesus Christ. Then it keeps unfolding throughout the ages until Christ comes again, as Joel 2:28 is inaugurated but it is not yet fulfilled. The last days will be fulfilled at the end of the age.

So where are we? We are in the last days now but not yet in its culmination. That occurs on the Day of the Lord that has not yet occurred, when He comes again. That is why Peter reached for this prophecy and then said “In the last days...” I think we are in the last of the last days and I think it’s going to get here quickly. I wish I had the time to tell you why I think we’re in the last of the last days but I do think it somewhat related to this Islam 7th Caliphate movement that is taking place that I think unites the two beasts of the book of Revelation. I would be glad to share that with you sometime. Am I frightened? No, I’m excited because one if it is not the last of the last days I can’t wait to see what He has yet in store. Two, if it is the last of the last days then come quickly Lord Jesus. Do I think it will get worse before He comes? Amen. Do I think it will get better before He comes? Amen. I believe the Kingdom of God will be spreading when Jesus comes.

I don’t know what the Lord is going to be doing with North America and that’s why I’m preaching my heart out on the book of Nahum. I know what I’d like Him to do here. I have watched the Kingdom go from Jerusalem and in the next generations it went south, it went east, and it went north. Then it turned and started going west and now it seems as if it is going back south and toward the east in places like Africa. I don’t know where all its going but I do know that God knows where it is going and God is accomplishing His purposes purposefully to reach all the nations so that young, old, male and female will raise up a voice saying ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’ They will call upon the Lord because the Lord has called upon them. Come quickly, the Day of the Lord! Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father, for the privilege to study this wonderful Bible that You have given to us that doesn’t contain truths that we need to somehow sympathetically manipulate but it is the Truth. Thy Word isn’t truths but it is Truth of Your glory revealed in Christ, the Lord and Savior. It is the glory of the Triune God revealed through Jesus, the preeminent Jesus, our Creator, our Redeemer and our Sustainer. How we thank You that we call upon Your Name and how we praise You for we call because You called upon us and brought us from death unto life, from darkness to light by the power of Your hand of grace, for I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.