

## Joel's remarkable prophecy of the Holy Spirit

Intro: In our lesson last week we took an overview of the book of Joel, looking at his message from God to Israel during a time of national devastation. We noted that Joel prophesied of the “outpouring of God’s Spirit” and “the day of the Lord” and how that those who “called upon the name of the Lord would be delivered”.

Today there is still a lot of uncertainty about the role of the Holy Spirit in God’s plan of salvation and perhaps a closer look at Joel’s prophecy will help. At least, it will give us some sense of what God was anticipating in His promise of the Spirit. And then we will look at how God’s words have been fulfilled. Hopefully, we will see as a result the great blessing that has come to us through the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.

### The prophecy of the Spirit's outpouring--Joel 2:28-29

Let’s think like Jews for a few moments and look at Joel’s prophecy. Joel’s prophecy predicts three important things:

An outpouring of God’s Spirit

A time of judgment for the disobedient

Salvation to those who call upon the name of the Lord.

All three are important and connected; but let’s focus on the first one!

Joel says that “God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh”. How would the Jews have understood such a statement?

Every good student of the Hebrew Scriptures was familiar with the work of God’s Spirit and inherent power connected with it.

The Holy Spirit had been active in the past:

The Spirit of God had effected the miracle of creation

*And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)*

The Spirit of God had come upon Israel’s leaders to endow them for their work and often with the accompanying manifestation of prophecy.

Perhaps they would have thought of 70 of Numbers 11

The judges of whom it was said, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon them”.

Israel’s kings like Saul (1 Sam. 10:6) and David (1 Sam. 16:13).

The Spirit of God had come upon God’s prophets

Balaam of Number 24

*David: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. (2 Samuel 23:2)*

*“Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. (Proverbs 1:23)*

What would have been clear to Jewish minds was the idea that the “outpouring” of God’s spirit meant the revelation of God’s will and with the blessings that attend it. And Joel makes that clear in the following phrases as he speaks of:

The features of the Spirit's coming

Its results--messages from God in various forms

prophecy

dreams

visions

Jewish readers would not have been surprised at all by this as the result of the Spirit’s outpouring. For these are the ways that God had promised to communicate His revelations in the past (Num. 12:6).

What was unique about Joel’s prophecy had to do with the scope of the prophecy, the recipients!

Its scope

“all flesh” (could be understood Hebraistically as “every living thing” “every human being”, “everybody within defined limitations) Perhaps the following phrases define “all flesh”.

Your sons and daughters

Your old and young men

Your male and female servants

In the past the Holy Spirit's work had been limited to a very few people used by God at different periods in history, mostly men in leadership; but this promise includes “all flesh”, people of all ages, both sexes, without social distinction and possibly even racial distinction (though this idea might not have been readily apparent to Jews at the time).

Its blessings

The messages of the Holy Spirit would bring men to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved from the judgments of God upon the wicked.

Thus Joel uses the term “pour out”, itself an expression of abundance and blessing.

And so this promise of God was given 800 plus years before the coming of Christ awaiting its time of fulfillment. Such a great promise received attention from the dawn of the NT era.

**Both John the Baptist and Jesus confirmed that the promise of the outpouring of God’s Spirit was near and explained the blessings of His coming**

John testified that Jesus would be the one who “baptizes with the Spirit and with fire”.

*“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. “And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather*

*His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:11-12)*

Jesus took up John’s statement indicating that He would be the one who would bestow the Spirit after His glorification.

*Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)*

As the time of his death drew near, he gave many specific statements about the Spirit’s coming (Jn. 14:16-17; 26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15), And after his resurrection, he identified that the time of the Spirit’s coming was very near. *“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)*

*He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:7-8)*

In addition, He too promised that the miracles indicative of the Spirit’s outpouring would have a manifestation among the disciples the apostles made:

*“And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:17-18)*

All these statements then anticipate the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy!

### **Joel’s prophecy began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost--Ac. 2**

The apostles had waited with anticipation for the fulfillment of the Father's promise, the Holy Spirit. They were gathered in Jerusalem on the first day of the week, perhaps to worship, when the Holy Spirit first came.

The outpouring of the Spirit began on Pentecost with the apostles of Jesus.

They received revelations from God in the form of languages they had not studied. These were manifest miraculous revelations.

*And they were amazed and marveled, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? (Acts 2:7-8)*

*Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” (Acts 2:11)*

Peter explains this was a fulfillment fo Joel’s prophecy

*but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: (Acts 2:16)*

*“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:33)*

Jesus, having received the promise of resurrection to sit on David’s throne is now showing that he is alive by pouring out the Spirit. Thus, the words of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself are being fulfilled.

However, this was not all the fulfillment; but the beginning of an outpouring that would continue for many years. Thus Peter promises his hearers a share in the promise of Joel.

*And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall 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 shall call to Himself.” (Acts 2:38-39)*

*I’m aware of the view that makes this a non-miraculous “indwelling” of the Spirit; but I believe it is more defensible to see it as an application of the prophecy of Joel who said “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (your sons, daughters, old, young, male, female).*

### **Further fulfillment of Joel's prophecy came through the laying on the apostles's hand**

In keeping with Peter’s statement in Ac. 2:38 we can see evidence of the outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem among the converts of the apostles:

#### **Stephen (Ac. 6:8)**

*And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. (Acts 6:8)*

#### **Phillip (Ac. 8:6-7)**

*And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. (Acts 8:6-7)*

#### **Later we read about Phillip's four daughters also being able to prophesy (Ac. 21:9)**

*Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. (Acts 21:9)*

#### **A general statement of the Spirit’s outpouring on the believers in Jerusalem.**

*“And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Acts 5:32)*

#### **In Samaria the new disciples received the outpouring of the Spirit through the laying of the apostles hands--Ac. 8:17**

*Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:17)*

*And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. (Acts 10:45)*

**In this case, because the Gentiles were the recipients it was necessary for Jesus to pour out the Spirit upon Cornelius and His household directly rather than receive the outpouring through the laying on of the apostles' hands.**

**The disciples in Galatia—Gal. 3:2,5**

*This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:2,5)*

**Timothy--2 Tim. 1:6**

*And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (2 Timothy 1:6)*

**Corinthians--1 Cor. 12:7**

*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)*

**Ephesians--Ac. 19:6**

*And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:6)*

Indeed the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh just as Joel had said and with the Spirit's presence came revelations from God and miracles to confirm those revelations. The evidence suggests that the outpouring of the Spirit was the normative experience for those who had contact with the apostles of Christ.

*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 upon them!" (Numbers 11:29)*

It was as if what Moses had at one time could only dreamed of was actually occurring.

**Conclusion: The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy should surely help our faith as we see God's promise fulfilled before our eyes (spiritually) in the NT accounts of the early church.**

**But what was the purpose of this outpouring of the Spirit? Why did God bestow the Spirit**