

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14G_Prophecy in the Prophets_Joel_Content2)

Introduction

As observed in our previous lesson, Joel describes the more immediate blessings that Judah would experience if she repented in chapter 2:18-27. In verses 28-32, Joel describes the more distant, eschatological blessings that will one day be experienced by a repentant Judah. (The events at Pentecost were a mere foretaste of what Israel would one day experience in full – a point reinforced by Peter’s use of the phrase – “in the last days” in Acts 2:17 instead of Joel’s “afterward” in Joel 2:28). These verses (2:28-32) correspond to judgment and deliverance associated with our Lord’s second advent. Ezekiel speaks of an outpouring of the Spirit in similar fashion (see Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29). The context of these passages is clearly associated with the period of Messianic blessings upon Israel and are considered related to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

This outpouring will be universal and without distinction of person. Ancient and modern barriers of sex, age, and class are broken (2:28-29). Among the signs associated with this universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit are wonders of nature affecting the heavens. This is to focus the attention of people heavenly in anticipation of the coming of the Lord. The clinching phrase is in verse 31 – “before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Note that in this passage, there is a clear reference to at least two distinct entities in relation to God – the Lord and the Spirit. The words of this passage – “I will pour out My Spirit” – reminds us of the words of Jesus in John 14:16-17. When we piece all of this together, we realize that the God of Israel – Yahweh – was God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹ Other examples of similar illustrations include Psalm 110 – “the Lord said to my Lord” – which Jesus attributes as a reference to the Father speaking to Him (Matt 22:41-45).

No Distinction of Person

Note that the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit is without distinction of person. Any barriers regarding sex, class and age are eliminated. God’s view of people in this passage is closely related to Paul’s teaching regarding no distinctions between class, sex or national identity (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days of Israel is without any barriers of:

- ❑ Gender – “your sons and daughters” and “both men and women” (2:28-29)
- ❑ Age – “old men...young men” (2:28)
- ❑ Class – “even on my servants” (2:29)

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Israel’s last days includes numerous wonders and prophetic utterances:

- ❑ They will prophesy (2:28)
- ❑ They will dream dreams (2:28)
- ❑ They will see visions (2:28)

¹ Ronald B. Allen, “*Notes on the Book of Joel*” (Unpublished class notes prepared by Dr. J. Carl Laney, revised by Dr. Ronald B. Allen for 304N, Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1996).

Temporal Phenomena

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on men and women is associated with wonders in the heavens and on earth. These phenomena include “blood and fire and pillars of smoke” in addition to a darkening of the sun and a redness to the moon’s light (v. 31). These descriptions are similar to John’s descriptions in the book of Revelation of events associated with the Messiah’s Coming (Re 6:12; 8:7-8, 12; 9:18). This is why the locust plague (Joel 1) which was so devastating reminded Joel of two things: 1) the impending judgment that Judah was about to undergo and 2) the future, eschatological events surrounding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

Similarities and Distinctions

There are certainly similarities and distinctions worthy of note between Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17ff. Some of the similarities include:

- ❑ The Holy Spirit was certainly experienced at Pentecost in a way that could be characterized as an outpouring.
- ❑ This was likely experienced by women and men, young and old.
- ❑ Both passages are associated with unusual speech, i.e. prophecy and foreign languages previously unspoken by the speaker.
- ❑ There were mysterious windlike sounds and tongues like fire at Pentecost that could be seen as wonders in the heavens and on earth.
- ❑ Pentecost was a time of tremendous evangelism similar to the calling on the name of Yahweh in Joel.
- ❑ Both passages center upon Jerusalem

On the other hand there are dissimilarities:

- ❑ The wonders and signs in the heavens and on earth mentioned by Joel were not recognized to their fullest at Pentecost.
- ❑ The notable egalitarianism of Joel 2 is only partially realized at Pentecost and following. There are limitations placed upon women in the local church (1 Tim 2:11-15).
- ❑ The Day of Yahweh is still future and was not realized during the lives of those who experienced the Pentecost event.

Millennial Blessings

The remainder of Joel’s prophetic book (chapter 3) is focused upon pronouncing judgment upon the nations in contrast to the future blessings that will be poured out upon Judah and Israel. While it is not quite as clear whether 3:1-17 is eschatological or not, it is very clear that verses 18-21 are definitely associated with the judgment attending the Messiah’s coming.