

It Shall Come to Pass
Joel 2:28-32

Acts 2:1-21

Acts 2:22-47

Psalm 89:11-18

This morning we are going to be looking at the last half of chapter 2 of the prophesy of Joel. Last week we talked about the promised restoration of the land, after the desolation of the plague of Locusts, upon the repentance of the people of Israel, we see in the first half of this chapter that God does indeed relent. Throughout this book we see this sort of cycle, and shift by the author between current and future events as well, speaking of the current plague that has befallen them in judgment, and the future judgment in a greater day of the Lord which will be unlike anything that has been seen before. We also saw likewise the same call to repentance in both cases, there was the call to repent that God may relent in his destruction of the land, and a call to repentance to escape the future destruction of that great and terrible day of the Lord, and we also saw that this repentance was of both a personal and corporate nature, calling on each individual to repent, and calling on the people to repent together in the gathering of the people to the temple.

So as we can very well see, there are many layers here to this prophesy and we need to understand that as we read such passages, that there is a current, and future message..and in the case of us who study such things 1000's of years now in the future of when it was written we need to be careful how we interpret such passages, it is generally my opinion that since the bible is the living word of God, and is just as relevant to us today as it was when it was written that such writings can also pertain to yet the future of mankind. So, we shouldn't look at such things as being for just that time, or seeing necessarily an absolute fulfillment in the written future, an example of that is that there are many who see much of the eschatological prophesies as being completely fulfilled in AD70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and therefore since that is finite and complete that we are in the last days, yet I think most of us at least understand that though that destruction in AD 70 was indeed great, the temple was indeed defiled, and destroyed, there is still yet coming a day of judgment and destruction.

My point is that I think we need to see these prophesies as being a bit fluid, that is, having a current, and future meaning. It is apparent here that the language of Joel when he is talking about that coming great day of the Lord, is apocryphal, there is an element of finality in that judgment. Verse 10 of chapter 1, "The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before his army, for his camp is very great for strong is the One who executes his word, for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible who can endure it? Therefore says the Lord, Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping and mourning, rending your hearts and not your garments, Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful." He will one day return in a final judgment, bringing destruction in his wake, judging and destroying the sin of this world, yet those who have repented, who have turned from their sin and follow him, he shall show mercy.

So again we see this future day, and a call to repent now because of it, the idea here is that we don't know when this day is coming, but it is coming so now, while it is today, while we yet have today, repent so that God may show mercy upon you in that coming day. One thing that is always in y thoughts when dealing with such things of the future, is also the thought that we don't know our own individual futures, we don't know when that day will be that we meet God. We always want to talk about the future day of judgment, we always ask, will God come back within our lifetime?

We can't know the answer to that, and I find it interesting that every generation believes that theirs is the one, and yet God relents, God waits, and we have not yet seen that day, yet though we may not see that great day of the Lord, we will see our own as we stand before him when life passes from this body. Whether in some future rapture, or in the inevitability of our own passing, we will face God, we will each have our own "day of the Lord." So my thoughts are, we need to worry less about some coming day of judgment of the world, less about whether when, or if, we will be raptured up, and focus on our own lives, our own hearts, and our own salvation...because our end day could be today, it could be tomorrow, it could be decades from now we don't know, but what we do know, is it will come, so we should be prepared.

So again, as I have been saying the past few weeks that we have been in this book, the call to repentance we see here is relevant to us today, you have today, you have right now and it is all you have there is definitely an urgency in this call because we don't know what the future holds, with the exception that at some time, we will pass, and we will stand before God either to face judgment, or a welcoming embrace. That is the true fate of mankind, this life is temporary, it is fleeting, and we will each have our own "day of the Lord." Which brings us to our passage this morning, Joel 2:28-32. Let us go ahead and read it, but let's go back a bit and start in verse 25. (read Joel 2:25-32) So as I was saying this morning we see this sort of rollercoaster in Joel's prophesy, where he shifts from current, to future, back to current and future again. This morning's text is no different as he talks about the restoration from what the locusts have destroyed and then gets into some obvious references of a future time.

As we look at this, again we need to be careful not to be so dogmatic in our understanding of this passage that it means a specific time, and a specific time only, there is some difficult language here that implies a future time from Joel's writing, but also a possible future time that has yet to come. Verse 28 mentions here, that "it shall come to pass afterward that I shall pour out my Spirit on all flesh." This passage, this prophesy is quoted by Peter in Acts chapter 2, which is why we read that chapter this morning. He is equating this time, as that future time that Joel mentioned, a day that the spirit will come upon God's people, and his people will prophesy, they will claim the name of the Lord that day has come, yet there are things here written in Joel that haven't taken place yet, the blood, the fires and pillars of smoke were not apart of Pentecost, it says the sun shall be darkened, and the moon turned to blood before that great and awesome day of the Lord. So there is yet a future mention here as well, of a final day, the end day, the day of the Lord's return.

It would seem that this passage is a spot of contention for some scholars, and the problem is trying to lock this passage down to one era, or one application. Some interpret this to be all about Israel itself, and I can honestly see where that is coming from in the context of what is happening in Israel with the plague of locusts, and the current judgment of God upon them. I have read some arguments even suggesting that this time of the spirit isn't Pentecost, even though Peter mentions it in Acts 2 and says...these things are as the prophet Joel wrote. Because there isn't the fulfillment of the later, the darkening of the sun and the moon turning to blood the dismiss it all as being some future event. This I believe is having to narrow of a mindset when looking at prophesy, it is looking at it as the answer is either, its already been fulfilled, or it hasn't....when the reality I think is, that it has been fulfilled, and it also hasn't been..its both, because God in his wisdom has written is word to be timeless, and relevant to all ages and generations. There is something to be gleaned and learned from every page in the word of God.

Sometimes we can be so quick to make application to what we know about the past, that we are blind to the future things. And I think to try to lock this down to just Israel, or just the time of Joel is an error, for even in the context of Joel's own writing there is the back and forth between current and future, and the point of it all is to drive the people to repentance. To me the message of Joel can be summed up like this " So, we are in the midst of a time that has yet to be seen in our land, a time of destruction and desolation, a time of starvation and suffering...yet, there will be coming a day that is greater, a day when the Lord comes to rain fire and destruction upon the sins of the world, a day of righteous judgment, a day of harvest where he will gather his people to himself, and burn the rest like dried up chaff. Because we know that this day is coming, now is the time to turn from our sins, now is the time to repent, now is the time to cry out to God for forgiveness before that great and terrible day comes." The point of Joel is repentance, it is a warning to his readers, both current and future that this life, this world, will not be forever, there will come a day of darkness greater then the world has known, and we should be prepared, having our hearts and our minds set upon Christ, and our sins covered by his blood so when he does come we are found among the righteous, we are members of the harvest, not the discarded chaff set to be burned.

For us, that great day of the Lord is a day of rejoicing for it will be the day that our struggles with this flesh will be no more, it will be a day where sin will no longer be a part of us, the day that we will be ushered into the very presence of God to be united with him, and those who have gone before. But today is not that day, right now is not that time, so we watch, we pray, we prepare, and we warn. Preaching the gospel so that others may escape such a terrible fate for we are now in that time which Joel mentioned, as we read this morning, Peter equated the Pentecost event to this prophesy in Joel, the Lord has indeed poured out his spirit upon all mankind, to clarify, there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile, there is no distinction between male and female, rich or poor, slave or free, all who are the children of God have received the spirit of God. Therefore we can minister this gospel with confidence, for we have the spirit of God working within us.

The way that I look at these last few verses here is sort of split up, verses 28-29 was a specific time, a specific moment, for Joel and the Israelites of his day this was a future day coming, but for us, it has already passed, then starting in verse 30 is another event, another future event that has not happened yet. To see these 2 linked together I think might be an error, and causes some to discard the event of the holy spirit as happening on Pentecost because these other events haven't followed But I think it is two events, and the first had to happen before the second, Verse 28 says, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I Will pour out my spirit" An event we know specifically happened in Acts chapter 2, but then verse 30 says "and I will show signs and wonders in the heavens and earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke." This clearly didn't happen at Pentecost, so he is describing a future event.

Basically Joel is saying, there is a coming day when this will happen, then afterward, there is coming another day when these other things will happen. It will be that final day of the Lord when he comes in all his glory to gather his children, and bring judgment upon the world. Now the 3rd section starting in verse 32, "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This expands across all time, for we know that in the old testament those who believed were found righteous, as Paul wrote to the Romans, Chapter 4:1 "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

And the same can be said today, it is not your works, but your faith which saves you, and faith is not your own but it is a gift of God, given to you so that you may believe. This last verse is sort of all encompassing, but focusing on these later days, these post Pentecost days, that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That is all it takes, repentance, and belief, no sacrifices, no ritual, no adherence to some laws and regulations, repentance and belief. As we see in chapter 2 of Joel, God doesn't require, nor desire these other things, he desires your heart, he desires a true heart broken in repentance as Joel writes, verse 13, "rend your heart, and not your garments." No ritual needed, just a broken heart aware of its sin and rebellion against God crying out for forgiveness. And in those days, those who cry out shall be saved. Joel is all about repentance, and finding peace with God. In the pictures that Joel paints of suffering, they are the results of being away from God, the locust was sent to bring Israel back from her rebellion against God, the later days, the great and awesome day of the Lord will bring terror and suffering upon the rebellious and sinful people, outside of God there is no peace. This is the message of Joel, repent, believe, and find peace with God.

The last half of verse 13 here of chapter 2, says, "Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. And he relents from doing harm." If we come to him, we will find deliverance but it must be a true repentance that is the point of rending your hearts not your garments. One can appear repentant, one can go through the motions and actions, it must come from a heart broken by it's sin, crying out to God for deliverance, anything else is empty ritual. And the final verse here of chapter 2 that who so ever cries out to the Lord, shall be saved, For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said among the remnant whom the Lord calls. There will be deliverance of Israel from this plague of Locusts, and there will be deliverance for Gods people from the great and awesome day of the Lord again weaving the current and future events together.

So, as we read these things our take away is that God is a God of judgment, but he is also a God of redemption. The error of the modern mind wants to paint God as this all benevolent being without judgment, a God who is all mercy, and all grace, with no righteousness. But that is not the God that is seen here in this prophesy, we see a God who sent punishment upon Israel in the form of Locusts in a swarm that has never been seen before to desolate the land and cause despair among the people with the purpose that they would turn to him, for he took away their prosperity, he took away their comfort, and took away their security leaving them with nothing, a barren land with little hope unless they repent and return to him. But we also see, that he does relent, that he does turn, and that he not only does so, but he blesses, he brings back the rains, the crops and the fields and the trees once again grow and bear fruit the and itself is restored, and the people are saved. The nature of God is he is all things, he is all mercy, he is all grace, but he is also all judgment and all wrath.

Our problem is that we don't understand the weight of sin, we don't understand the true consequences of our rebellion against him, mankind does not understand the curse that they are under. So they create for themselves a God who forgives, but does not judge, a God who provides, but does not punish...yet scripture is full of both aspects of God's nature and dealings with mankind. It took the blood of Jesus Christ to cover our sins, nothing else would do, God had to provide for himself a way to redeem his people for we are lost and fallen and incapable of redeeming ourselves. All of mankind is cursed, all of mankind will perish, if not for God, he has chosen to save a remnant, he has chosen to save for himself a people. So, that begs the question...are you one of his? Have you come to him with a broken heart full of sin crying out for repentance? It is the only way, he is the only way to find redemption, and peace from this lost and dying world, from the temptations and death grip that sin has upon mankind.

He is calling his people, the call is going out, repent and believe, turn from your rebellion against God and follow him. The inevitable thing about this life, is that it will always end, as much as we try to suppress it from our thoughts, we all will die, we all will stand before God, and when it does happen where will you be? Standing before the throne in judgment? Or bowing before the throne worshiping the one who brought you redemption and peace. Now is the time, and today is the day, if you hear his call, repent and follow him.