

### A Turning Point in Joel's Prophecy

#### Joel 2:18-32

Joel 2:18-27 - *"Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.*

*<sup>19</sup> The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. <sup>20</sup> "But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things."*

*<sup>21</sup> Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvelous things! <sup>22</sup> Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; for the open pastures are springing up, and the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their strength.*

*<sup>23</sup> Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you— the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. <sup>24</sup> The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. <sup>25</sup> "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. <sup>26</sup> You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. <sup>27</sup> Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God, and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame."*

#### Background Notes

The middle of chapter 2 is a turning point in Joel's prophecy: from desolation and devastation to deliverance and blessing for Israel. Chapter 1 concerned a literal plague of locusts that invaded Israel. Joel described it in terms of an invading army. Chapter 2, on the other hand, concerned a literal army that would invade Israel in the future, and Joel described it in terms of an invading locust plague.

There is an historical aspect to this prophecy in terms of the "Day of the Lord." The prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Assyrians invaded the land in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, and when the Babylonians invaded the land in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. But most of Joel's prophecy about the day of the Lord is still future. It will be fulfilled in the End Times.

At that time there will be deliverance for the nation of Israel from all her enemies, and blessing will come on the land and on the nation. Obviously, that time has not yet come. This blessing and deliverance will come to Israel in the future, according to Joel 2:18-32.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There will be material blessing and deliverance for Israel in the future.

Verses 18-19: *“Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, ‘Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them. I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.’”*

These prophetic verses (and those that follow) should **not** be spiritualized to apply the Church today. This prophecy refers to the *literal land of Israel* and the *literal nation of Israel* in the future! “But,” you may say, “that means the Jews have to return to their homeland, and a state of Israel must be in existence at that time.” That’s right! Jews have returned to their homeland and established a nation within the past hundred years, but there’s more to come. Jews who are scattered around the world will continue to return to Israel as we get closer to the future Day of the Lord, and the Lord’s return. Look at Joel 3:1.

The productivity of the Land of Israel (v18-27) is amazing – and it will continue to increase. Over the years that I’ve been leading Holy Land tours, we’ve watched the land of Israel literally become more productive - in a relatively short time! Slowly but surely, the early and the latter rains of verse 23 are returning to the Land. And all of this is just a foretaste of the material blessing and deliverance for Israel in the future!

What about verse 20? *But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea.* Sometime in the future, there will be a major invasion of Israel by a northern army. Will it be Russia? Syria? Iraq? We can’t say for sure. But one thing we know for sure is that the Lord will rescue and deliver Israel, because they are His people and Israel is His Land (v18).

It looks like the invading army will be driven into the Judean wilderness facing the eastern sea (Dead Sea), with their backs to the western sea (Mediterranean Sea). This sounds a lot like the invasion of Israel by Gog, the Prince of Rosh, prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39. It also sounds a lot like the invasion described in Daniel 11:40-45.

Is the Ezekiel 38-39 invasion the same as the Daniel 11 invasion? I lean toward the position that they are two separate invasions, but they seem to be close enough in time that they could be considered the former and latter phases of one invasion from the north. The former phase would be the invasion of the King of the North (Daniel 11). The latter phase would be the invasion of the Prince of Rosh (Ezekiel 38-39).

Historically, the well-known deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. was but an illustration of the future deliverance of Israel from the northern armies of the End Times. There will be material blessing and deliverance for Israel in the future.

## **2. There will be spiritual blessing and salvation for Israel in the future.**

Joel 2:28-32 - *“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, your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup> And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

*<sup>30</sup> “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. <sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of 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.”*

Joel is known as the “Prophet of Pentecost” because of this passage. Peter quoted these verses on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21). Now the big question: Was the Joel 2 prophecy completely fulfilled at Pentecost, or was it partially fulfilled? It was certainly not completely fulfilled at Pentecost, for the following reasons:

- a. Joel 2:28 says that it will come to pass *“afterward.”* After what? After the material blessing and deliverance that we just read about in verses 18-27 - and that will not come until the last days.
- b. The signs of verses 30-31 did not happen at Pentecost, but await until the End Times.
- c. In Acts 2, Peter did not say that the events of Pentecost were a complete fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy. He said, *“this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,”* and then he quoted from the Joel 2 prophecy. In other words, Pentecost was an illustration, or foretaste, of what it will be like when Joel’s prophecy will be fulfilled in the last days.

One other possibility is what’s known as the “dependent fulfillment” view, meaning that **if** the nation of Israel had repented at the time of Pentecost, then the Joel 2 prophecy would have been completely fulfilled at that time. But because the nation did not repent, but rather continued to reject her Messiah, the Joel 2 prophecy awaits to be fulfilled in the End Times. I tend to favor the “dependent fulfillment” view at the present time.

In any case, many Jews will turn to the Lord for salvation in the future. Verse 32: *“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of 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.*

This “remnant” of Jewish people is the “all Israel” that will be saved, according to Romans 11:26. The Jews coming to Christ today are only a foretaste of what’s to come in the future. There will be great spiritual blessing and salvation for Israel in the future!

## **Practical Application**

### **Let the Lord restore your locust years.**

Verse 25: *“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.”*

The point of this verse, in its context, is that when blessing comes to Israel in the future, the years that had been lost and wasted because of their sin and God’s discipline will be restored in blessing. This has great application today for both believers and unbelievers.

I once used this verse as a text for a sermon that I gave at a service in a state prison. I told the men that even though they had wasted and ruined some of the best years of their lives, if they would turn to the Lord and walk with Him, He would not only save them but He would restore to them “the years that the locust had eaten.” He would now bless them!

Even as a believer, it’s possible to waste much of your life doing selfish, useless and even negative things. Maybe you have come to the sad realization that you’ve wasted a lot of your years in pointless or futile activities, or even sinful behavior. Maybe you have even ruined your life in some way. Sadly, you may have reaped what you’ve sown. Maybe God has had to deal with you in discipline.

Joel 2:25 is filled with hope for the future if you repent from your former ways, and turn back to the Lord now. Start to walk faithfully with Him. He can restore to you “the years that the locust has eaten.” Your life can become a blessing in many ways. Turn to the Lord, and let Him restore your locust years!