

Joel 2:28-32
The Day of the Lord: When God Invades

I. Structure

- A. 1A - Judgment on Israel: When locust invade (1:2-20)
 - 1. The people are called to mourn (1-14)
 - 2. Lamentation (15-20)
- B. 1B - Judgment on Israel (2:1-11)
- C. 1C - Repentance (2:12-17)
- D. 1B²/2A - Yahweh Relents/Judgment on Nations (2:18-20)
- E. 1A²/2B - Yahweh Restores/Grace: Locust plague reversed (2:21-27)
- F. 2B² - Grace: The Spirit is promised (2:28-32)**
- G. 2A² - Judgment on the Nations (3:1-21)

II. 2:28-32 — Grace on all flesh

- A. **28-29 — The Spirit for all flesh.** We can assume that Israel repented, because we see the blessing that was poured out on them. Yahweh called them to repentance with the promise that He might relent, and He did, indicating that Israel repented. Rain did fall again, and their crops did grow. They went from famine to abundance because of the grace of God. It's "afterward" that Joel says the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.

Consider the statement in verse 27, "***You shall know that I, I am in the midst of Israel.***" As New Covenant believers, it's easy for us to see this as fulfilled with the Spirit's presence in our lives. In this way then, Yahweh is taking things to the next level. Not only is he blessing his people with material abundance, but He is providing them with spiritual blessing — His presence with them.

Yahweh says that He will pour out His "Spirit on all flesh." **But who is the "all flesh?"** All social classes, all ages, all genders. Some would say that this is an answer to Moses prayer. Moses had seen the Lord pour the Spirit on the 70 elders selected to help him lead. When two others, who were not part of the 70, received the Spirit Moses responded in Numbers 11:29 to the one who informed 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!***"

But does Joel mean that "all flesh" is all nations or does he have something else in view?

We need to consider several points in the text to answer this question. First, who is the antecedent to "your"? Second, contextually, who is in view? All nations or Israel? See verse 27.¹

Duane Garrett explains it this way, "Speaking to his own dispirited generation, he emphasized that Israel and not some other nation would have this great proof that God is among them. From the biblical perspective the Gentiles' reception of the Spirit does not mean that God is no longer God of Israel but that Gentiles have submitted to Israel's God."²

¹ See also Ezekiel 39:29 and Zech. 12:10

² Garrett, 369.

As an OT Jew, what would be going through your mind as you consider Joel's statement about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh?

B. 30-31 — The cosmic realities of the Day of the Lord

1. 30 — In addition to the pouring out of the Spirit, there will be cosmic signs that demonstrate that this is the Day of the Lord. Joel tells us of the scope of these realities: The heavens and the earth. All are impacted by this coming Day and it's visible for all to see.

We need to keep in mind what we saw earlier in chapter two. There was darkness, the sun and moon were darkened, and the stars ceased to shine, all of which described the Day of the Lord. **The “Blood and fire and columns of smoke” in this passage are reminiscent of other OT events. What are they?** We see the fire and smoke associated with God's Divine presence with his people (Exodus 13:21-22), and we see the blood present in the plague given to Egypt (Exodus 7:14-24). Yet, these seem to be more than just a statement of God's presence, but a statement of future judgment. This becomes more clear as it's connected with verse 31.³ This would seem to describe Yahweh's presence and His judgment.

*Garrett writes this, “For Joel the day of the Lord was not exclusively judgment or salvation; it was simply the coming of God to deal with people. For some this means life; for others it means death.”*⁴ This explanation shows why we arrived at the title “When God Invades” for the book of Joel.

2. 31 — That the moon turns to blood is intriguing. If we keep the parallel with the sun being darkened in view, it makes sense to see this meaning that the moon is darkened as well. This is also true in verse 10, where the sun and moon are darkened.⁵

All of this is taking place before the great and fearful Day of the LORD. The implication is that the Day of the LORD is still future to this event. This has been the tone used of this Day throughout the book; that it's always something future yet somehow presently happening as well. We saw this with the locust plague, with the army that was coming, and now here with the Spirit. In all these cases the Day was described as future, yet imminent. However, we can't ignore that they are just as equally happening in the present circumstances. This becomes clearer when we see that the locust were the army of the Lord (2:25), and that Yahweh had warned them with another army that was described as the Day of the LORD (2:1-11). **Consequently, it could be said that the Day is current, imminent, and still awaiting its fullest consummation.**

³ Some would argue that these descriptions convey the imagery of war. Blood, fire, and smoke are typically present where there is war, and there are other passages in the OT that could be used to support this. However, it seems more obvious to see these descriptions point to the presence of Yahweh as described above.

⁴ Garrett, 270.

⁵ Chisholm, 63.

C. 32 — Salvation

Who are the “everyone” in this context? There are some indications that Israel is primarily in view because of, “For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape...” However, the text makes it clear that the “everyone” are all those who call out to the LORD and how are called by the LORD.

What do the two callings in this verse tell us about the nature of salvation? This is a clear display of Divine sovereignty and man’s responsibility. Yahweh calls, and those He calls must also call out to Him in order to have this salvation/deliverance. It would seem that deliverance is more in view in this passage, especially as it relates to the Day of the Lord that is coming. Those who call out to Yahweh for deliverance will endure that great and fearful Day! Yet, what is deliverance from the Day of the Lord other than full salvation from future judgment?

III. Joel 2 in Acts 2 — How does understanding the Joel passage in its context impact your understanding of its presence in Acts 2:17-21?

IV. Summary — We’ve seen that Yahweh responds to the repentance of His people by blessing them with rain and abundant crops, now we see Him blessing them with the presence of the Spirit and the offer of salvation for all who call out to Him. Though no one can endure the Day of the Lord, Yahweh has made a way — this is ultimately seen in the person of Christ.

V. Application

A. **How do we bridge this passage to our context and apply it to our lives?**

B. **What does this passage show us about the character of God?** This passage should blow our minds. As New Covenant believers we don’t realize how incredible it is that we have the Spirit. That God would want to take up residence in us, that he would want to be in our midst, is truly mind blowing. His blessings on His people, Israel, by giving them the Spirit — and thereby us as we are grafted in — shows His great love for us.

C. **What are the implications of knowing that salvation is offered to all people?**

D. **How does knowing that you have the Spirit change the way you live?**