



# The Book of Joel

The Lord is God

## ‘The Book of Joel’

### The Prophet

The Book of Joel was written by the prophet Joel, [Acts 1:16-17](#) / [Acts 2:39](#) who father’s name was Pethuel, [Joel 1:1](#). Although there are twelve other men with the same name mentioned in the Bible, we can’t identify them with the author of this book. In fact, all we know about Joel is what’s found within the book itself. We do know that His name means, ‘[The Lord is God](#)’, and he was a very powerful prophet who boldly spoke the word of God. He was from Judah and was addressing the nation of Judah, especially southern Judah.

### Date

The date of the book is pretty much uncertain, some place it as written around 900 B.C., some place it around 400 B.C. which means they believe it was written after the exile, and still others date it around 830 B.C. It was probably written around the same time as Obadiah, Elijah and Elisha and around the time of king Joash.

### Summary of the Book

Basically, God through His prophet Joel, warns the people of Judah, that they need to repent but if they don’t repent of their sins, then judgment would come, and they would be punished severely. The book was written in response to a devastating event which totally destroyed the land, a plague of locusts had devoured everything in the land, of which we have no record and then a drought followed, it’s during this drought which Joel writes his prophecy because at this time the whole land, all the animals and everyone living in it were suffering greatly, [Joel 1:9](#).

Joel really wanted the people to understand that the locust plague and drought were God’s doing in order to bring about their repentance. If they didn’t repent, then even more destruction would come upon them. The good news is that within all the doom and gloom there was hope for the future, [Joel 2:28-32](#).

### Joel 1

‘The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors? Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation’. [Joel 1:1-3](#)

It’s God whose speaking through His prophet Joel and his first word is the word, ‘[hear](#)’. Oh, how people need to listen to God, even today! When God speaks everyone should be silent and listen to what He has to say, it’s such a shame that there are so many people who want to speak on ‘[God’s behalf](#)’ but they themselves, never listen to what He actually says. Hence why we have so many different religious groups in the world today and so many fragments of Christianity.

Joel first calls on the elders and then all who live in the land to hear and listen to what God is about to say to them. and [what was God going to say to them?](#) Something so bad was going to happen which would be spoken of for five generations. It wasn’t going to happen in their generation but in the generations to come, [Exodus 10:2](#). Like most of the Old Testament prophets, I doubt very much if Joel completely understood what was going to happen, [1 Peter 1:10-12](#).

Judgment is coming to Judah, the locusts plague which happened in the past, is now going to be used by Joel to speak of an army sent from God in the future. The locust plague was going to be devastating, it was going to be so big that they would speak about for five generations to come, [Isaiah 45:7](#) / [Amos 3:6](#).

‘What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips. A nation has invaded my land, a mighty army without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white.’ [Joel 1:4-7](#)

### Locusts

Locusts are around 2 ½ inches long and can fly up to 25mph. It’s reported that one locust can eat the leaves on a tree in 15 minutes. The female of the species is more dangerous than the male. Back in 1915 there was a reported locust plague, they came from the Tarsus Mountains in the north through to Egypt in the south. Millions were captured and buried alive and it took two months for all the trees to be destroyed down to the bark.

[Three things, which accompanied this plague](#)

1. The noise of their wings.
2. There were so many of them it blocked out the sun.
3. Their excrement fell like rain and was very acidic.

#### Four Hebrew words used for locusts

1. Yalek, meaning hedge eater.
2. Gazem, meaning creeping locusts.
3. Chasil, meaning devourer.
4. Arbeh, meaning locust.

Because there are four kinds of locusts, this means it covers everything, this was total devastation, this is the picture it gives, this is what happened in the past. Moses and Solomon had prophesied this kind of judgement before, **Deuteronomy 28:38-39 / 1 Kings 8:37**, but even then, God's people didn't recognise that God was behind it.

The wine and fig trees were very important to their economy, but these too were totally destroyed. Notice that Joel describes the locust plague as a 'nation', this was going to be a strong nation which would come and ultimately devastate the whole land, **Proverbs 30:25-27**.

'Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the betrothed of her youth. Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD. The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the olive oil fails. Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed. The vine is dried up and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree—all the trees of the field—are dried up. Surely the people's joy is withered away.' Joel 1:8-12

In the custom of the Jews, if a woman was engaged to a man, the man automatically became known as her husband, being engaged was as good as being married in Jewish law, **Deuteronomy 22:23-24 / Matthew 1:19**. Sackcloth is a very coarse, rough fabric woven from flax or hemp and is usually worn as a sign of mourning.

Notice that the grain, oil and crops are also affected, this basically means that their religion is going to be affected, **Exodus 29:38**. If the farmers and vinedressers couldn't produce anything, there would be nothing to sacrifice and so the priests would end up going hungry. Cereal crops and fruit trees signify that their day-to-day living is going to be affected too.

'Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God and cry out to the LORD. Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds are shrivelled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up. How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering. To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field. Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness.' Joel 1:13-20

Here we see Joel pleading for the people to cry out to the Lord, we see that he begins by telling the priests that they should lead this plea by introducing a fast and bring everyone together. This is a call for repentance and Joel is saying, 'they know this has happened in the past, they know what it can do' and so now he has set them up and is going to tell them what all of this means. **Joel 2-3** is basically a commentary of **Joel 1**.

This is a call by Joel to the people and he tells them to repent and pray from their hearts. And notice he starts with the 'priests' which means this was to start from the top to the bottom, God starts with the people who should know better, **James 3:1**.

The priests had to put on sackcloth which is a sign of mourning and they are told to repent because this thing that's coming isn't very far away. 'The day of the Lord is near', this was to be a day of destruction and judgement and if the people didn't repent then, would all suffer the consequences.

Joel asks a series of questions to which the answer is 'yes' to all of them. God never does something without prior warning and He never punishes people without letting them know why. Every animal, everyone and even the land was suffering, and so Joel cries out to the Lord for some kind of break from it all. Fire had destroyed the land and the trees and so in a way God had brought them to their knees.

### The Day of the Lord

The phrase 'The day of the Lord' is found five times throughout the Book of Joel, Joel 1:15 / Joel 2:1 / Joel 2:11 / Joel 2:31 / Joel 3:14. In the Old Testament it's used to describe when God vents His anger, Isaiah 13:9 / Zephaniah 2:2-3 and the day when He stands against His enemies, Ezekiel 13:5. Notice that Joel says that the day is 'near', other prophets used this same phrase, Isaiah 13:6 / Ezekiel 30:3 / Obadiah 1:15 / Zephaniah 1:7 / Zephaniah 1:14.

In the New Testament that day is called, 'the Day of the Lord', 1 Thessalonians 5:2 / 2 Thessalonians 2:2 / 2 Peter 3:10. This is the Day when the Lord will return for the final time with His saints and His angels, this is the Day when He will judge the nations, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 / 1 Thessalonians 5:4 / 2 Peter 3:10 and rule with, Matthew 25:31ff / Revelation 19:11ff.

### Application

We often wonder what it will take to bring people to their knees, never mind a nation, for Judah it was going to take a plague of locusts and a drought to bring them to repentance. The locust plague had already happened and now they're in the midst of a drought, Joel uses the past plague and the current drought as lessons to let them know that God is trying to get their attention and they need to repent of their disobedience.

We see many people finally turning to the Lord when life gets a tough, usually through bad decisions or difficult circumstances. The problem comes when we forget our past and what the Lord has done for us. Maybe it's not a bad thing to speak about how God finally brought us to our knees to our children and grandchildren, maybe through our past experiences we can help them to recognise when God is trying to get their attention, maybe we can teach them to learn from our past mistakes, Romans 15:4 / 1 Corinthians 10:11-12.

### Joel 2

'Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defences without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?' Joel 2:1-11

Joel describes the coming of the Lord as a reoccurrence of the locust plague, he tells us that the locust plague is actually an invading army, led by God as He comes in judgment against His people, Isaiah 2:12 / Amos 5:18.

### The Trumpet

The trumpet was blown for 4 reasons.

1. A warning.
2. To call people together.
3. To get the people to move as a body.
4. To proclaim rejoicing.

### The Locusts

Here the trumpet is to be blown as a warning, the locusts are coming, and they will be a destructive force. Locusts never fought over food, they were disciplined, hence this is a very well-trained army. This army is going to be God's army and they were brutal and the fiercest of all times, it was the Babylonians, Ezekiel 1. The army is so great and powerful the whole earth would shake, things were going to be bad.

Joel is telling them that the land is going to be totally destroyed by the locusts, just like a fire sweeps through a forest, nothing will be left. The locusts were so numerous, they sky turned dark and they climb the city walls and went into every house.

The people needed to know that this locust plague was sent from God, after all, He commands them, but if the people didn't repent, then this huge army would come later to destroy them, in other words the Assyrians and Babylonians would come.

‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ Joel 2:12-17

God Himself speaks here and elaborates on the fact, if the people repent, they will receive mercy. Because every aspect concerning repentance is mentioned here, ‘fasting, weeping and mourning’, make no mistake about it, He is looking for true repentance, [Psalm 51:17](#) / [2 Corinthians 7:10](#) and if they repent, then God would truly bless them. Blowing the trumpet here was for the reason of bringing the people together, this was to be repentance on a national scale.

Because all the elders, children and priests were to come together, this tell us the scale of their sin, everyone was involved, everyone was guilty. Everyone needed to repent and turn to God. We can imagine the nations surrounding Palestine thinking to themselves, ‘the God of Israel was no different from any of their gods,’ hence the reason God’s people needed to repent, so that God could bring them some kind of relief to them and show the nations around that He isn’t like their gods.

‘Then the LORD was jealous for his land and took pity on his people. The LORD replied to them: ‘I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations. ‘I will drive the northern horde far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land; its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise.’ Surely, he has done great things! Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things! Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. ‘I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.’ Joel 2:18-27

Here God speaks of immediate, temporal and future blessings, all their possessions, which were taken away, would be replaced, rain would come again, and produce would be grown, this is restoration of the land and the people. They would have no doubts that God was behind these blessings.

Remember that plague and the drought had gone on for some time and so, God promises, if they continue to repent, they would be fine but if they turned their backs on God again, they would need to watch out, trouble would come. This ends the first part of Joel’s prophecy and it clearly related to the people of his day. The rest of the book looks forward to a period described as ‘afterward’, [Joel 2:28](#), ‘in those days and at that time’, [Joel 3:1](#), and ‘in that day’, [Joel 3:18](#).

‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The

sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.' Joel 2:28-32

### The last days

There is so much going on in the 'religious world' concerning the last days, people are looking for signs and wonders to prove we're in the last days, there are wars and there are terrors which all point to the end of the world. I wonder what the Bible actually teaches concerning 'the last days', I think you'll find it fairly straightforward.

'In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.' Hebrews 1:1-2

Notice how the writer begins, he writes as a matter of fact. There's no doubt or question about the existence of God, he simply says, 'in the past God'. We find a similar style of writing in Genesis 1:1 'In the beginning God.' Again, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' John 1:1.

And notice again that there's no doubt or question about the existence of God in these authors mind. In other words, the Bible never sets out to argue for the existence of God, it's taken as a matter of fact that God is, God exists. And because the writer says, 'at many times and in various ways' this actually implies that God had more to say. In other words, each prophet didn't carry the final message. The whole truth wasn't out yet, God's revelation wasn't complete yet.

We know that God first spoke directly to the patriarchs, then God spoke through the written law. Then God spoke in dreams and visions and God also spoke through the prophets. But God wasn't done revealing His word yet. And I use the word 'but' because that's the word the writer of this letter uses. And he uses that word to emphasise the contrast between how God spoke and revealed His Word to mankind in the past and how He revealed His complete and final revelation in Jesus.

He says, 'but in these last days' which is obviously a Messianic reference. We've been living in the last days ever since the arrival of Jesus. The last days are the days of the Messiah, not the end of the world. Several centuries before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-29 foretold that the Spirit of God would be 'poured out' in the 'last days'.

When Peter preached the first Gospel message to the Jews in Acts 2 he says, 'And in the last days it will be,' God says, 'that I will pour out my Spirit on all people, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.' Acts 2:17

Peter quotes from Joel 2 and notice how he describes the days in which they were living at that point in time. He describes them at 'that point in time' as living in 'the last days'. Countless sermons have been preached, thousands of books have been sold which all try tell to tell us that certain things are happening in the world today and they tell us these are all 'signs' that Jesus is about to return. And so, they go out on the streets preaching and they have these posters which say, 'the end is near, we're in the last days.'

Look at what Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy, 'There will be terrible times in the last days'. 2 Timothy 3:1. And then Paul lists a whole bunch of non-Christlike attitudes but look at what he tells Timothy later, 'Have nothing to do with such people.' 2 Timothy 3:5. This is present tense, have nothing to do with those people who were around at that time. That in itself, tells us that Timothy was living in 'the last days'.

When Peter is talking about the Christ, he says, 'He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake'. 1 Peter 1:20. Was Jesus around during the time of the Apostle Peter? Of course, He was. Peter understood he was living in the last times.

Jesus uses a similar kind of language in Matthew 24:1-35. Now remember the disciples have come to Jesus privately to ask Him 'what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' And so, Jesus is answering their questions. Let me give you an example of how Jesus answers them. Jesus says, 'How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!' Matthew 24:19.

He uses the words **'those days'** throughout this text, when He's describing the destruction of Jerusalem. But when we carry on reading from **Matthew 24:36** through to **Matthew 26:46**, He uses the words **'that day'** to describe what will happen at the end of the world.

**'But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father'. Matthew 24:36**

**Do you see how His words are more specific?** Now if we were studying the topic of **'the end of the world'** that's one of the texts we would go to. But we're not studying that today, we're studying the topic of **'the last days'** which aren't something still to come. **'The last days'** were then, as the prophets looked forward to the time by speaking of **'in those days and at that time.'**

If the world continues for another thousand years, we would still be in the last days. And so, God formerly spoke through the prophets at many times and many ways, but in these **'last days'** He has spoken to us by His Son.

Joel here in our text, promises future blessings, He encourages them to repent and tells them He will personally be with them individually. Prophets, kings and priests would usually have God's Spirit, **Numbers 11:16-30**, but God says He would do this for everybody. Yes, this if for the Jews, but it's also a future prophecy, concerning every generation, this promise is for everyone who would accept God on His terms.

The day of the Lord had been postponed in 840B.C. until later when two things would happen.

1. God's Spirit would be poured out.
2. The day of the Lord would happen.

Notice that Joel mentions, sons, daughters, old men and young men, this is used to tell us that that there's no special class of people upon whom God's Spirit will be poured out, like happened with the Old Testament prophets and kings, **2 Kings 24:2 / Hebrews 1:1**.

Notice also the miraculous aspect of God pouring out His Spirit, first of all we find prophesy. A **'prophet'** was one who **'spoke forth'** for God. A **'prophecy'** was the message **'spoken forth'** by the servant of God who spoke as he was given words to speak by the Spirit of God and **'prophecy'** denotes the act of speaking for God.

All of these words cover both delivering the message of God, that is, preaching and teaching God's Word. Remember the daughters of Philip, **Acts 21:9**, we should understand that they were enabled to speak on God's behalf. They had been granted the gift of prophecy, and we shouldn't be surprised at this, because, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter reminded his hearers that Joel had spoken of the coming of a time when, **'Your sons and daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.'** **Acts 2:17 / Joel 2:28**.

We know that people had visions in the New Testament, but dreams are not so common, except for Joseph, a Jew, **Matthew 2:19-23** and Pilate's wife, a Gentile, **Matthew 27:19**. More importantly there's nothing in the New Testament which indicates that Christians today would have dreams and visions, **Hebrews 1:1-2**.

Joel continues about the prophecy of what God would do in the last days. The wonders are describing about the end of the Jewish nation. When God speaks of **'the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood'** is figurative language which God uses to describe the judgement and end of an earthly nation, **Isaiah 13:9-10 / Isaiah 34:4 / Malachi 4:1 / Malachi 4:5-6**. When the Jews heard this language, they wouldn't be thinking the end of the world, as some believe today, they would be thinking **'which nation is God judging now!'**

The sun usually referred to the king of the nation, the moon and stars referred to the governors, generals and captains who received their power from the king. Joel here is speaking about the nation of Israel, Israel as a nation would come to an end. **And when was this going to happen?** When the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, **Galatians 3:26-29**.

Notice that Joel says that this will be **'the great and dreadful day of the Lord'**. Although this would be a great and wonderful day for believers, it would certainly be a really sad day for those who refuse to believe. For them, this day would be the day of judgment for all those who wouldn't accept the results of the outpouring of the Spirit.

In the light of Peter's use of this passage, in terms of deliverance, the main meaning of it, is applicable to salvation from sin, with the related indication that just a few, a 'remnant', will actually participate in this salvation. In the wider meaning of the prophecy, 'mount Zion and Jerusalem' stand for the church or kingdom of Jesus Christ which began there. In the spiritual sense, it's still true that 'The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.' Isaiah 2:3.

### The Holy Spirit

We need to remember the place which the Holy Spirit occupies in God's plan of salvation, and that we should also recognize that Acts 2 marks the commencement of the age of His ministry, the age in which we now live and understand the significance of His ministry in God's plan of salvation.

### The Spirit of God in the Old Testament age

In Old Testament times the 'Spirit of God' didn't have a constant ministry, so far as the nation of Israel was concerned. For example, He's never said to 'indwell' or 'fill' that nation which was created at Sinai by the enacting of the Mosaic Covenant, in the way He is said to indwell the new people of God that were created by the New Covenant, ratified by the death of Jesus.

Instead, the Old Testament, Scriptures reveal that there were special periods of time when specially chosen individuals were inspired and motivated by the Spirit of God, to enable them to fulfil special purposes. But He had no constant ministry, and no special relationship with the individuals who made up God's ancient people.

### The Scriptures reveal how the plan of redemption unfolded

1. The decision to make Man's salvation possible originated in the mind of God Himself, 1 John 4:9 / 1 John 4:16.
2. The plan of salvation was put into effect by the Word of God, who 'appeared at the end of the age to put away sin.' Hebrews 9:26 / Galatians 4:4-5 / John 1:1 / John 1:14.
3. When the redemptive work of Christ had been accomplished, the Holy Spirit came to make the Gospel effective, John.16:7-11.

But the Spirit's ministry couldn't commence until the Lord Jesus had returned to the Father. This is made clear in John 7:39, and in John 14:26, where the Lord speaks of 'the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name'. We see, then, that each member of the Godhead, that is, God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, or, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are all involved in our redemption.

And today, wherever and whenever the Gospel is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit will seek to produce conviction of the hearts of men and women, on the three important matters stated by the Lord Jesus Himself in the last passage mentioned, because the Gospel Age is the Age of the Spirit's ministry.

The prophet Joel, therefore, was predicting the coming of a time when those individuals who received the forgiveness of their sins through faith in, and obedience to, the Christ, would also be granted God's 'dorea', His 'free' or 'extra' gift of the Holy Spirit, as an 'indwelling Presence', enabling them to become the people He intends them to become.

It's to this coming of the Holy Spirit that Peter referred on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38. In explaining how he and his fellow apostles were able to speak in languages they had never learned, Peter said, 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel'.

### What did Joel and Peter mean by 'poured out on all flesh'?

1. He did NOT mean that 'all flesh' would receive the 'measure' of the Spirit then being demonstrated by the apostles. John 3:34, 'measure' is from 'metron' and means 'capacity'.

The apostles' 'baptism in the Spirit' was something uniquely promised to them by the Lord Jesus Himself, and it was given in order to equip them to undertake an equally unique responsibility as His 'witnesses', Acts 1:8. Their baptism, their 'overwhelming' in the Spirit, would:

- a. Guide them into all truth.
- b. Give them total recall of all the things Jesus had taught them.
- c. Reveal to them new truths, John 14:13 / John 14:26, and,
- d. 'Clothe' them with power, Luke 24:49.



Such promises were never made to anyone else in all of biblical history, and, regardless of what some denominations may claim, no-one today receives the **'baptism of the Spirit'**.

2. Peter meant that **ALL** who accepted Jesus as the Christ and submitted to Him in obedience, would also receive God's gift of the Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit is God's own gift.

It doesn't relate to a gift from the Holy Spirit, nor does it relate to the **'gifts of the Spirit'**, the **'charismata'**, or miraculous **'grace gifts'**, about which Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church, in **1 Corinthians 12-14**.

That God's gift of the Spirit is available to all, is clear from the fact that Peter said the promise was made **'to you and your children'**, the Jews to whom he was then speaking, **'and to all who are afar off'**, the non-Jews, or Gentiles, **Ephesians 2:17**. In **Acts 5:32**, he further states that God gives this gift **'to those who obey Him'**.

3. This **'free'** or **'extra gift'** is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He **'dwells in you'**, **1 Corinthians 3:16**, so that **'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have (received) from God'**, **1 Corinthians 6:19**. Furthermore, **'you are in the Spirit if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'**, **Romans 8:9**.

### Summary

**ALL** obedient believers receive the **'Gift of the Spirit'**, that is, the Holy Spirit is **GOD'S** own gift, **Romans 8:11**. This is **'the Spirit who dwells in you'**. **1 Corinthians 3:16 / 1 Corinthians 6:19**. The miraculous gifts, were gifts which the Holy Spirit **HIMSELF** bestowed on certain individuals, and, according to **1 Corinthians 12:11**, the Spirit's gifts are given **'as He chooses'**, or, **'as He wills'**, and were not given to everyone. This question, **'Do all speak in tongues?'**, clearly implied by Paul in his rhetorical questions in **1 Corinthians 12:29-30**.

The purpose of the miraculous gifts was to establish the truth and build up the church, **Romans 1:11**. Paul longed to visit the church in Rome, to impart some spiritual gift **'to strengthen you'**. He was writing about a **'measure'** of the Spirit beyond the usual **'gift of the Spirit'**, which these Roman Christians had already received when they were baptized into Christ, **Romans 6**.

These spiritual gifts were bestowed on believers by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, **Romans 1:11**. Read also, Paul to Timothy, in **2 Timothy 1:6**, and notice, **'by the laying on of my hands'**. Only Apostles had the power to lay on hands, to impart spiritual gifts. In **Acts 8** we read that Philip went to Samaria to preach the Gospel, **Acts 8:4ff**. There he displayed miraculous power, performing **'signs and wonders'** which endorsed his preaching of the Gospel.

The Samaritans believed and were baptized, **Acts 8:12**. The apostles in Jerusalem heard of their conversion and **'sent down Peter and John'**, **Acts 8:14**, who laid hands on the converts. Peter himself stated that baptism into Christ brings **'the gift of the Holy Spirit'**. Since the Samaritans had already been baptized into Christ, this imposition of the hands of the apostles was an additional blessing and was followed by a demonstration of gifts of the Spirit, which Simon must have witnessed, and which impressed him so powerfully that he offered to buy **'this power'**, **Acts 8:18-19**.

**Acts 6:6** records that Philip, the evangelist, had, himself, already received the laying on of apostolic hands. Yet, although he performed acts of power in Samaria, he was not able to do what the apostles did. He couldn't pass on the spiritual gifts to others. Had he been able to do so, the visit of the apostles, Peter and John, would have been unnecessary. This surely means that the age of miraculous spiritual gifts was limited to the lifetime of the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands, and it ended with their deaths.

It's a shame that many seek the **'gifts'** but not the **'Gift'**. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is God's Gift, **Acts 2:28**, but a gift is only a gift when it is accepted. And the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus as the Holy Guest, but He will not enter uninvited!

### Application

God really wants to bless us, but we must be willing to repent, when He commands us to, **Luke 13:5 / Acts 2:38**. Repentance simply means to reconsider our ways and then change the direction of our lives and start following God and His ways.

There's always the temptation to read too much into any text and make it mean something it was never meant to mean. **Joel 2** is one of those chapters where people make it mean something it was never meant to mean. All kinds of

doctrines have come from this text, especially when it comes to God's Spirit being poured out and the miraculous gifts.

### Joel 3

'In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine to drink.' Joel 3:1-3

Although the immediate promise would be to the restoration of Israel from the scattering of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, everything in this chapter is to occur 'after the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh'. God will judge all nations on account of His people, especially Judah's enemies, Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt and Edom. Gathering the nations is a reference to the gathering of spiritual Israel out of all nations through the preaching of the Gospel, [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [Mark 16:15-16](#) / [Acts 8:4](#).

The Valley of Jehoshaphat isn't a literal place in Palestine but a figurative place where God will bring His judgment, kind of like the place 'Armageddon' in [Revelation 16](#). The Valley of Jehoshaphat which means 'God shall judge' and 'Armageddon' are the places where God will vent His anger and wrath upon all those who oppose Him.

Although God would oppose His people's enemies and bring them out of all nations to which they had been taken captive, [Ezra](#) / [Nehemiah](#). The fulfilment of this prophecy is seen in the Gospel where God calls out people from captivity of their sin, [2 Thessalonians 2:14](#). When the Israelites were taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, their captors showed little consideration for the people. 'They cast lots for my people', refers to the sinfulness of Israel's enemies, drunkenness, and human slavery, especially child-abuse, are prominent here.

'Now what have you against me, Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland. 'See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away.' The LORD has spoken.'

Joel 3:4-8

Tyre, Sidon and Philistia had mistreated God's people and they will reap what they sow. They will be treated as they treated others around them, especially God's people. They stole the temple treasures of Israel and placed them in their pagan temples of false gods. They traded in slavery by selling Israelites to other nations.

Later, the very people to whom they had sold God's people, the Greeks, would eventually be the people who would conquer and sell them as slaves to other nations. They eventually reaped what they sowed when Alexander the Great conquered their cities.

'Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, LORD! 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!' Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. 'Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.' Joel 3:9-17

The nations, Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt and Edom are called to prepare for battle, they are called to come to the 'Valley of Jehoshaphat', where the Lord will judge the nations. This again, speaks of judgement on Judah's enemies.

God will overthrow these people and He will use judgment of these people in reference to any people who come up against Judah. The word, 'warriors' mean mighty ones, this could be either angel, [Daniel 9:10ff](#) or cherubim, [Ezekiel 10](#). Whoever they are, they God's chosen fighters. God's enemies will have no chance.

Notice that Joel calls the place the ‘**valley of decision**’ which simply means the valley of judgment. In other words, the nations were called by God to judgment. The nations were so evil, that God now decides to judge them and destroy them, which meant God’s people would be free from them. This is a picture of God’s kingdom standing and the earthly kingdoms falling.

Like we noted earlier, the mention of the sun and the moon being darkened is figurative judgment talk, which symbolises the end of the kings and rulers of the nations, **Hebrews 12:22-29**. In other words, there’s going to be big changes.

God is described as roaring like a lion towards His enemies, **Joel 2:11 / Jeremiah 25:30 / Amos 1:2**. But at the same time, He speaks of hope and strength to His own people. When God carried out His judgment on the nations, the promise was that no conquering strangers would pass through Jerusalem again and so, in context of the text, we can see that Joel is speaking of the new Jerusalem, and spiritual city of God, the church, that descended from heaven, **Revelation 21**. In other words, no stranger, unbeliever, would pass through the church.

‘**In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD’s house and will water the valley of acacias. But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations. Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? No, I will not.’ The LORD dwells in Zion!**’ Joel 3:18-21

‘**In that day,**’ the blessings will be abundant, there will be blessings of security and there will be a future for God’s people. Judah shall be blessed by a ‘**fountain, from the house of the Lord,**’ God’s people are going to live in safety under the cleansing blood of the Messiah. Egypt and Edom who symbolise God’s enemies, will be desolate because of their violence. Judah and Jerusalem shall abide forever, acquitted of their guilt. God won’t free the wicked but bring just judgment on them for their harm that they brought on His people.

#### **Application**

When difficult times come into our lives, they can actually be a blessing, if they turn us back to God, **Amos 4:6-12 / Job 1:20-22**. God sees all, the good and the bad, He sees those who oppose Him and His people and promises they will be judged. He also promises that repentance is available to all, but if people don’t repent then they will be judged, **2 Corinthians 7:8-10 / Joel 2:13**.

Israel was chosen in 586B.C. but in A.D.70 they were punished because they didn’t change their ways. We must remember that ‘**The Day of the Lord**’ is coming for us all, **2 Peter 3:7-10**, after which there will be no more chances to repent, and so we must prepare now, **2 Peter 3:11-14**.

The good news is that, God doesn’t want anyone to perish, because He loves us too much and the reason He hasn’t returned yet is because He’s giving people time to come to Him.

‘**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**’ 2 Peter 3:9