

The Day of the Lord

An Expository "Journey" Through the Prophecy of Joel

6- A "Magnificent Perplexity"; the End of the First Covenant and the Birth of the Church- Part 1

October 18, 2020

Joel 2:28-32

28 "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

29 "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

31 "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

To the Glory of God

Now the Old Testament ends with this Expectation:

Malachi 4:1-3; 5&6

For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the Lord of hosts.... Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not

come and smite the land with a curse."

Now there was no way that this "Day of the Lord" of which Malachi speaks here (about 400 years before Jesus was born) with these characteristics for the Wicked:

- Burning like a Furnace
- Where all the Arrogant and Evil-doers will be chaff
- Where they will be set ablaze
- Where there will be neither root nor branch left

... and, the "Day of the Lord" that has *these* characteristics for those who fear God's Name:

- The Sun of Righteousness will rise with Healing in its wings
- You will go forth and skip like calves from the stall
- You will tread down the wicked
- They will be ashes under the soles of your feet

... was understood to be in two stages- separated by over 2,000 years. Nobody knew that. Nobody saw it. Nobody understood that God would move on the *second* part of this Prophecy- FIRST. And so, about four Centuries *after* God the Holy Spirit moved on the Prophet Malachi to utter these words, the Sun of Righteousness would be born. And those, who believed on Him, would go forth and skip like calves in celebration of their Salvation.

And we are yet to witness the *second* part of this Prophecy, where on the "Day" when Jesus comes back- He will *forever* remove all Evil from the earth; by forever removing all Evil-doers; and those, who arrogantly thought their own righteousness was enough. And about *that* "Day"- God said,

The Revelation 14:18-20

Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from the vine of the earth*, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

The Old Testament “Prophetic Perspective”- looked at the nearer and the farther Mountains in the long “mountain range” of God’s Events that He was bringing on the world. And, for them, that sequence of Mountains was NOT clear. It was vague; and general; and opaque; and cloudy; and distant.

And so, God granted those precious and godly men the ability to see and to say many true things about the Future. And *most* of the time, they didn’t understand what they were seeing or what they were saying. They knew that God was moving on them to speak (and write)- *infallibly*. But their limited Knowledge about Jesus; and the God-imposed *limitations* of the First Covenant- *prevented* them from seeing and comprehending in fullness.

Part of the Ministry and Anointing of the Office of Apostle (and why I so vigorously defend the Concept of Cessationism¹) was that God gave the Apostles the ability to correctly (and fully) interpret what the Old Testament Prophets spoke and wrote. And once the Apostles interpreted those Old Testament Mysteries- that was their meaning. No one has the Authority to “add to” or to “take away from” what the Apostles said in the New Testament- about what the Old Testament means.

So, even though God gave the Old Testament Prophets the ability to speak and write without error- He did NOT give them understanding that, in between those high, majestic mountain peaks of Divine Truth- there were valleys. And, sometimes, those valleys were very wide.

So, when Jesus arrived- as the Sun of Righteousness- with spiritual Healing in His Wings- there was no burning of the Arrogant and the Evil-doer. In fact, in many ways, Evil continued to seemingly prosper- as God was building a “spiritual Kingdom” rather than to restore Israel to her former Glory.

When Jesus stood in the Synagogue and read from **Isaiah 61**- He stopped at the semi-colon of Verse 2. And so, Jesus uttered that He had come to...

... proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...

... but He had NOT come, the first time, to bring in:

... the Day of Vengeance of our God.

... that would be left for His *second* Advent.

But this brought about a great Perplexity into the minds of many. And yet, they recognized that it was God. And so, it was a “Majestic Perplexity”. It was truly “Majestic” because in His Life; Death; and

¹ Cessationism is the Teaching that the Offices; Anointings; Gifts; Signs; Wonders; and Miracles that God gave to *establish* the Church accomplished their Goal and therefore, we no longer need them. What we need today are the Offices; Anointings; Gifts; Signs; Wonders; and Miracles that will propagate the already established Church around the world.

Resurrection- guilty lost sinners were forgiven and made Righteous. But it was also truly a “Perplexity” because Jesus did NOT seem to fulfill ALL that the Prophets spoke. Much was left *undone* and *unfinished*.

Now, many of us today understand this “unfulfillment” as being divided between Jesus’ FIRST Coming- His FIRST ADVENT- and His Return. Jesus came the FIRST time to seek and to save that which is lost. And He will come again to wage war against all Evil-doers and to destroy those who refuse to bow. But the only reason we understand that- is because we have the completed Revelation of God in the 27 Books of the New Testament to give us the “missing pieces”. If all you had were the 39 Books of the Old Testament- you would simply not know or understand.

In His finished Work- Jesus paid for; and He accomplished- once for all- *breathtaking* things for us. And yet, we do not have the *fullness* of all those glorious Accomplishments. And so, even with us today- who have and who read and understand the 27 Books of the New Testament- there is for us a “Majestic Perplexity”.

All that the New Testament tells us will happen to the saints and to the created Universe- has not yet happened. And we don’t even know when it will. It is a “Perplexity”.

For example, the Purchase and the Ransom of all the elect (all those who will believe on Jesus throughout all ages)- was completely and finally and totally and fully *accomplished* 2,000 years ago on a Cross outside the city of Jerusalem. **Hebrews 9:26b** says,

... but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

... Majestic! And yet, all of the elect have not yet been saved (and some, I would suppose, have not yet been born). “Perplexity”!

So, in the FIRST Coming- the Payment for Sin; and the Provision for Righteousness was finished! And that Payment and that Provision can NEVER be improved or added to- in any way! If we are united with Jesus (by virtue of the Miracle of the New Birth), by Faith alone; in Him- as Savior and Lord- and the supreme Treasure of our lives- we will never be more forgiven or made more righteous than we are- right now! We cannot, ever, in any way, become more Justified than we are- right now! That is a breathtaking Achievement! And it is truly Majestic!

But it is also a “Perplexity” because, even though we have “**already been saved**” (Ephesians 2:5); **salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** (Romans 13:11b). Although we have *already been* “**transferred into the**

Kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13); “we, through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness” (Galatians 5:5b). Although we have *already been* adopted into the Family of God (Galatians 4); we are “waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons” (Romans 8:23). Even though “by one Offering, He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14); we are “being perfected” (Galatians 3). Even though we *have already* been “set free” from the slave master of Sin (Romans 6:14); the “good that I want, I do not, but practice the very evil that I do not want” (Romans 7:19). Even though we have already “passed out of death into life” (John 5:24); we have an “appointment with death” (Hebrews 9). Even though we *have already* become a “new creation” (2Corinthians 5:17); we await the “Resurrection of our bodies” (Romans 8). Even though we *have already* “seen the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ” (2Corinthians 4:6); we “see in a mirror dimly” (1Corinthians 13:12).

So, when Jesus came into the world- he set in motion a “Majestic Perplexity”. And for 2,000 years, theologians have been trying to put these seemingly opposite things together. And they have come up with a “Way” to understand them. And so, we say that the Promises of God are...

“Now... and Not Yet”

It isn't, “Now- BUT not yet”. Because it isn't “either- or”. It is “both- and”. So, it is “Now- AND not yet.” So, *in one sense*- we HAVE ALREADY received the Promises of God- *right now*. And yet, *in another sense*- we still await them to be fulfilled- *at some future date*. Another way of understanding this is to say that, *in some sense*, we have what Christ paid for- *right now*. And yet, *in another sense*- we eagerly look forward to having the “fullness” of all that Jesus did for us- at some future date- maybe even after we die.

And the same logic can be used, many times, to try to understand Old Testament Prophecy. What God gave to the Prophets may have *already been* fulfilled- *in some sense*. And yet, *in another sense*, the Prophecy may need to be fulfilled- at some point in the future as well. And a lot of people agree with this. However, I want you to remember that I said this- as we go through Joel's Prophecy- because I am also going to say something else that you may have never heard before.

While it is true that *some* Old Testament Prophecy may have a “dual fulfillment” in that, *in some sense*, it may have already been fulfilled and, *in another sense*, it may yet still need to be fulfilled- while that is true about *some* Old Testament Prophecy- it is NOT true for ALL Old Testament Prophecy. You simply CAN'T put this template on ALL Old Testament Prophecy- even if you

want to. You have to have a reason to apply this logic. And more specifically, you have to have a *New Testament* reason to do so- or you're just making things up. So, be careful. Because what works for one Old Testament Prophecy does NOT work for all. And that is why I call these kinds of things a "Majestic Perplexity".

Now we have come to the part of Joel's Prophecy that everyone has been waiting for. The Passage, that Brother Vern just read to us, is the only reason most people get into **Joel** in the first place. Most people completely pass over everything else that Joel said in this Book- because the Apostle Peter quoted this particular Passage on the Day of Pentecost in **The Acts 2**; and Jesus used a portion of it in His Teaching in **Matthew 24**.

Now there is a lot in this Passage to unpack. And so, right off "jump street" let me say to you that I do NOT possess all Truth; or all Wisdom; or all Insight about this Passage or any other Passage in the Bible. I am just a man. And I am an utterly *unimportant* sinner, who, before the foundation of the world- God chose to "set His Love" upon me to save me. And it wasn't my fault. I was trying as hard as I could- to sin against God; and to run as fast as I could AWAY from Him.

But at a young age, God called me to Himself. And at God's appointed time- God, the Spirit sovereignly *dragged* me to Jesus. And the one and only Savior of the World received me; and He washed me; and He cleansed me; and He forgave me; and He made me Righteous- by Who He is; and what He alone has done- by living and dying and rising again.

And God sovereignly *separated* me from my father's House; called me to preach His Word; filled me with His Spirit; and then turned me loose out in the world. And I have made every mistake that a genuinely saved human being can make. And, even though I have tried with all my heart to be right- I have been *more* wrong about *more* things than most people.

But I've never been wrong about Jesus. I've never been off-base or even confused about Who Jesus is; and What Jesus has done. And so, God was merciful to me, to forgive my mistakes; and to teach me; and train me; and to empower me; and enable me to persevere so that I may "Get the Gospel right". And I honestly think I am closer now to "Biblical Christianity" than I have ever been. But I will never stop until God takes me home.

So, that is the man, who stands before you- trying to interpret what Joel wrote in this Passage- around 800 years before Jesus was born. But, by God's Grace; and to God's Glory- I promise you that I will do my best- to *exegete* and *exposit* this Passage as rightly and as fully as I can. And I also promise you that what I say about this Passage- is what I truly and honestly believe to be correct.

But I may be wrong about some things. And so, you are free to *disagree* with me about what I will say about this Passage. But understand this- as you may

disagree with me- you are NOT free to disagree with God or His Word. Okay, let's go.

Now the Key to understanding this Passage is found at the *beginning* of verse 28 that says,

It will come about ...

Now the phrase, “**It will come about**” that Joel wrote down here- is a Promise from God that something *mighty*; and *powerful*; and *glorious*; and *earthshaking*; and *transformative* will happen. But I want you to notice that Joel didn't say that this titanic transformation *might* happen; or even that it *should* happen. Instead, he said, It “WILL” come about- or it “WILL” happen.

Now how can a human being talk like this? Perhaps 10,000 different things had to happen *to*; or *for*; or *with*; hundreds and maybe even thousands of people over an 800-900 year time- frame in order for what Joel says here- to come to pass. So, how can *anyone* talk with such Certainty like this? How could Joel promise what would happen in the future with such Certainty and Confidence?

The “Absolute Certainty” in Joel's Words illustrates the *amazing* relationship between what the true Prophets spoke- and God. You see, when Joel gave us the Words of this Book- he was speaking “on behalf of” or “in the place of” God Almighty. And that means that Joel is one of only around 40 men, in the history of the world, who *experienced* the mysterious Process called, “Inspiration”.

So, in some way² that we really don't understand, God the Holy Spirit “moved” on Joel. And as this Prophet uttered these Words- they were the very Words of God Himself. So, these Words are “Scripture.” They were “breathed out” by God the Holy Spirit. And, by extension, that makes these Words to be:

- **Inerrant** (*does not* contain any Error)
- **Infallible** (*not able* to be in Error)
- **Authoritative** (able to “bind the conscience” of the believer)
- **Relevant** (applicable to 21st Century believers)
- **Sufficient** (all we need for a “life of godliness”)

... here is what the Apostle Paul said about these kinds of special Words:

2Timothy 3:16&17

² Nobody actually knows how the “Process of Inspiration” worked. What we do know- is that it was NOT dictation; nor was it that God took control of various men's vocal chords (or hands); and *overwhelmed* their intellect. For further study- please consult, “The Doctrine of Inspiration” on the Church website.

**16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Now, this Passage of Scripture is called, “Prophecy”. And Prophecy is divided into two different groups:

1. *Fore-telling* (predicting the Future)
2. *Forth-telling* (Preaching)

... and *both* of these are grouped together to be what the Bible calls, “Prophecy”. Now these particular Words of Joel; this portion of sacred Scripture; this Passage of God’s Word is “Fore-telling”. So, Joel is “predicting the Future” here.

But what makes what Joel is doing here *different*; or *unique*; or *special*; or *set apart* from what “Sister Selena, the Fortune- teller”³ does? Joel is *obeying* God; and uttering the *true* Word of the Lord- so people will hear; repent; and be saved. Fortune- tellers are *disobeying* God; and are being used by satan- to deceive people. And Moses was very clear about God’s absolute Condemnation on Fortune-tellers; Witches; Sorcerers; Astrologers; and those, who supposedly, contact the dead; or who sacrifice their children; or who operate in the capacity as “Mediums”.

Leviticus 19:31

Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12

10 “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

12 “For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.

Now we can argue about whether people actually have this kind of ability- or if they are simply deceiving unstable souls (I personally believe both is true).

³ This is a real person that I met; and preached the Gospel to; and called her to repent; and be saved- several years ago. She would not pray at that time- but she did say that what I had told her “made a lot of sense”. I have prayed for this woman many times over the years.

But suffice it to say that *most* of the people, who appear to operate in “mystical ways”; or who operate in ways that are “above the natural” (supernatural)- are categorically *condemned* by God. Except true Prophets of the Lord. And, under the inferior Revelation of God in the First or the Old Covenant- men were called by God to be Prophets of the Lord. And, as Prophets, these men heard the Word of the Lord; and then spoke that Word (prophesied) to the people of God.

Now, at first, these men were called, “Seers” (**2Chronicles 33:18; Isaiah 29:10; 30:10; Micah 3:7**). And, as the Revelation of God became more and more “progressive”- God moved on Samuel to be one of the *first* men, who operated *exclusively* as a Prophet.⁴ Now when we were on our “journey” through the Epistle of **1Peter**- we discussed the unique Ministry of the Old Testament Prophets, who operated under the inferior First or Old Covenant. Let’s look again at **1Peter 1:10-12**:

**10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,
11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.
12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.**

Now this has to do with HOW the Old Testament Prophets uttered Prophecy. First of all, Peter says that these men had the Spirit of Jesus Christ “WITHIN” them”. And this is very important- so please remember this as we go through this Passage in **Joel**- because in this Passage- Joel foretells about a very *different* way in which God the Holy Spirit is going to relate to human beings than what was normal under the Old Covenant.

Now the reason that Peter said this (and the reason why Joel’s Prophecy is so important)- was because people, having God the Holy Spirit *dwelling continually within them*- was NOT normal; it was NOT common; or usual under the Old Covenant.

When you read the Old Testament- you find descriptions about HOW God’s people related to the Holy Spirit. The relationship between God’s people and the Holy Spirit was much different under the Old Covenant than it is today under the *superior* and *final* NEW Covenant.

⁴ The Bible also says that Moses and Abraham were Prophets before Samuel (**Deuteronomy 34:10; Genesis 20:7**), yet neither one operated exclusively as Prophets.

Before Jesus- God the Holy Spirit operated much *differently* than He does now. Back then- God the Spirit was present with God's people. But, by and large- He was NOT with them- *in the same way*- that He is with us today. With very rare exceptions- God the Holy Spirit "fell" on believers under the Old Covenant. And He *empowered* and *enabled* certain people to obey God; to do great exploits; and to proclaim God's Word; and God's Goodness to the world. But after God used these people- God the Holy Spirit then "lifted" from them. So, God's Spirit "fell on" them but then He "lifted off" them.

For example, when Joseph interpreted the dream for Pharaoh- they said this about Joseph:

Genesis 41:38&39

38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?"

39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

Now we know now that Joseph was a "type" of Jesus Christ. But the *reason* they could say this about Joseph- was because being "filled" with God the Holy Spirit was very *rare* back then. And that made Joseph to stand out from the others- as someone, in whom, was a "Divine Spirit".

Yet, what happened to Joseph was NOT common. For example, look what the Prophet Samuel wrote about King Saul in **1Samuel 16:14**:

Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him.

The craftsmen who helped build the Tabernacle are said to have been "filled . . . with the Spirit of God" (**Exodus 31:3**). Joshua is described as a man "in whom is the spirit" (**Numbers 27:18**). The Judges Othniel (**Judges 3:10**), Gideon (**Judges 6:34**), Jephthah (**Judges 11:29**), and Samson (**Judges 13:5; 14:6,19; 15:14**) were also in this category.

Now it is *possible* that Deborah, who served as a judge and who functioned in the Name of the Lord, was also "filled"- even though it is not specifically said of her that she was filled with the Spirit (cf. **Judges 4:4-7**). The Holy Spirit indwelt both Saul and David (**1Samuel 10:9-10; 16:13**) and presumably all the Prophets, though (like Deborah) this is not said specifically in every case.

But again, the reason these people are mentioned shows that they were the exceptions. ALL people did NOT have the same experience with the Holy Spirit. Most people had a very distant; vague; shadowy; and unclear relationship with

God the Spirit. And that was the most *common* way that God the Spirit related to God's people back then: He came. But then He went. He was there- and then He was NOT there. He fell on them. But then He lifted from off them. So, for the most part, there was no *permanence of God the Spirit*; no *continual dwelling*; no *constant Presence* with the Old Testament saints.

One of the main things that makes the New Covenant to be so much better; so infinitely *superior* to the Old Covenant- is in the fact that every single genuine believer today is "filled" with God the Spirit. And this simply CANNOT be overstated. God the Holy Spirit literally goes INSIDE the body of all genuine believers; and He "walks in them"- leading; guiding; and directing them into Paths of Righteousness. And He NEVER leaves! God now dwells in the "temples" of our bodies- forever! Read what the Apostle John wrote about John the Baptist's Testimony from **John 1:29-34**:

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Now look again at what John the Baptist said here. He said, "*He, Who sent me to baptize in water*"- said to him,

"He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit."

God gave John two Signs that would identify the Messiah. Two "identifiers" that would show John, Who Messiah was:

1. When you physically see the Spirit *descend* on Him
2. When you see the Spirit *remaining* upon Him

Now why were *these* the two Signs? Because it was NOT the way

that God the Holy Spirit normally related to the Old Testament saints. As you read through the Old Testament, you see that God the Holy Spirit was absolutely with the saints of God. Yes, He was. And that is because nobody can be saved without God the Holy Spirit moving *on* them; and *in* them; and *for* them; and *to* them. The Apostle Paul said,

1Corinthians 12:3

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Nobody can be saved- absent a very intimate; personal; sovereign; powerful; miraculous; and supernatural Act of God the Holy Spirit to *forcefully* open our blind eyes; and to *powerfully* unstop our deaf ears; and to *effectually* take out of us our rock-hard, stony heart and replace it with a soft heart- that has both the ability and desire to believe.

You see, every single human being, who is born after the Fall of Adam- is born completely “lost” and totally “depraved”. We are born- completely *separated* from God. We are conceived in our mother’s womb- “spiritually dead.” Stone-cold dead- in a spiritual sense. And so, we are “God-haters” by nature. *Nobody*, in their lost condition, loves God; and *nobody* seeks after God. *Nobody* desires to be near God; and *nobody* desires to follow God- unless they are FIRST given new, spiritual, Life- through the supernatural and sovereign Miracle of the New Birth.

Because of the great Tragedy of Original Sin- we are all shaped and formed as babies- utterly blind to the Beauty and Majesty of Jesus Christ- Who is the Glory of God. Our ears can hear ANYTHING other than the Sound of God’s amazing Grace. And the genuine, sincere Affections of our hearts- embrace ANYTHING except God and the things of the Spirit of God (**1Corinthians 2:14**). We enjoy; we are satisfied; and we delight in ANYTHING other than God- with Whom we find no Joy at all. This is what being “Lost” and “Fallen” means.

So, until and unless God the Spirit moves on us FIRST- we are doomed. Because *nobody* can change “who they are”. *Nobody* can alter their own Nature. And *nobody* can stop sinning; or forgive themselves; or make themselves Righteous.

Now this is why the great Battle over just *when* God the Holy Spirit comes into a person, is so curious to me. Many Baptists teach that God the Spirit comes to the lost individual, “at the moment of Salvation”; while most Pentecostal; Charismatic; or Full Gospel folk teach that God, infilling the individual, is the first “Work of Grace” AFTER Salvation.

And while both of these views have some merit- they both miss the point entirely. And they both illustrate a *terrible* misunderstanding of the Condition of lost people to begin with.

You see, because we are conceived in our mother's womb as utterly "lost" and "depraved"- unless God the Spirit moves on us- FIRST- *before* we pray; *before* we even *want* Salvation- *nobody* would ever hear the Gospel; *nobody* would ever repent; *nobody* would ever trust in Jesus; and *nobody* would ever be saved.

So, the very FIRST thing that God the Holy Spirit must do *for* us; and *to* us; and *in* us- is to sovereignly give us "new, spiritual Life". We must be "born again" by a violent; forceful; effectual; and sovereign Act of God alone- or we will all die in our Sins. And with that new, spiritual Life; with that new "divine nature"- we *hear* the Gospel; and we are moved to *believe* the Gospel. And as we believe- we repent; and we trust in Jesus for Justification.

Now early on, the Fathers of the Church developed various "Summary Statements" about the "Essential Truths" of the Bible. And these "Summary Statements" were called, "Creeds".⁵ And the purpose of Creeds was to help the rank and file members of the Church understand what they should believe- BEFORE they were baptized. Back then, the majority of people were illiterate, and so, the Leaders of the Church taught these Creeds; and the people *memorized* them; and *understood* what they meant. And then at the "Public Profession of their Faith" (Baptism)- they *recited* these Creeds and then they were baptized.

And the Creeds dealt with the Fundamental Truths of the Christian Faith- concerning God the Father; God the Son; God the Holy Spirit; the Church; Baptism; and the Second Coming. And the section of the "Nicene Creed", which dealt with God the Spirit read something like this:

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father *and the Son*⁶, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets.

So, 1700 years ago, the Christian Church believed and taught that God the Holy Spirit is:

The Lord and Giver of Life

⁵ The most common of these Creeds are: The Apostle's Creed; The Nicene Creed; The Definitions of Chalcedon; and the Athanasian Creed

⁶ The phrase, "and the Son" was added several Centuries later. This phrase is called, the "Filioque"

Now, over the years, this has all been watered down. But what the Leaders of the early Church *meant* by that phrase- was that no human could be saved- without God the Holy Spirit coming to that person- FIRST- and giving him “new, spiritual Life”. This is being “Born Again” or being “Regenerated”. And they understood this to be a sovereign Work of God the Spirit- to go inside the body of a chosen, spiritually dead individual- and *sovereignly* open his eyes; *sovereignly* unstop his ears; and *sovereignly* give him a heart that is both “able” (empowered) and “willing” (the transformation of the Affections of the heart) to believe.

Now far too many, in the modern church teach that we must “believe” in order to be “born again”. But that is exactly *opposite* of what the Bible teaches. The Holy Bible teaches that, since we are ALREADY spiritually “**dead in trespasses and sins**” (**Ephesians 2:1**)- we must be born again- FIRST- so we may have that new, spiritual Life- so we may believe and be saved.

Another way to understand this dynamic is to understand what Paul wrote in **2Corinthians 3:18- 4:6**, when he said,

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Now, those of you, who have sat under my Ministry for any length of time- know that I cherish this Passage- as being one of the *best* ways to understand what happens to lost people- when they are born again by the Spirit of God. In 4:4, the Apostle teaches what the Condition is- for people, who are unsaved:

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...

Here Paul teaches that satan has “blinded the minds” of the lost- those who “do not” (and who cannot) believe. So, how does satan blind our minds? By filling them with something else- *anything* else. So, in every case- there is a “sinful swap” an “exchange” that is made. Here is how this same Apostle phrased it from **Romans 1:21-25**:

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Here, the Apostle taught that lost people “exchanged”; they “swapped” the very Worth and Value and Importance and Beauty and Glory of the incorruptible God- for shiny trinkets; and things that are made; and things that are passing away. Then, down in verse 25, he restated the same thing- only using different words:

they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Now why would thinking human beings do that? Because they do not love or value or cherish or delight in God. But why don't they find Joy in their Creator? Because their minds have been “blinded” by satan. This is what it means to be “lost”.

But what is it that satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving *to*?

2Corinthians 4:4b

... so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Until a person “sees” Jesus like this- as being the very Image of God Almighty- he CANNOT be saved. And Paul teaches that “seeing” Jesus like this- is carried out through the “Gospel of the Glory of Jesus Christ”. So, unless and until the lost soul has his blinded mind “opened” or “unveiled” so he can “see”- he will remain lost.

So, the *main* thing that satan works to preserve- is our blinded minds. We simply CANNOT “see” or “behold” Jesus in His Glory- as lost people. And because we do not “see” the Value and the Beauty and the Importance and the Delight of Jesus- we CANNOT love Him on any deep or abiding basis. And this is why it is so easy today for people in the modern church to regularly engage in unspeakable Sin- and not even be convicted about it. They have never really heard true, Gospel preaching. And so, their eyes and minds remain closed- and they do not see Jesus- in His Glory.

But it is true that we cannot love on any real or lasting basis- that which we have never seen or understood. And so, these people remain lost- and they respond to their lost Condition- by “setting their Affections” on ANYTHING- *except* Jesus.

So, unless God does something for us- *sovereignly*- all by Himself- *everybody* would remain lost. So, what does Paul say that God does?

2Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Here, in the very *same* way that God the Holy Spirit took the spoken Word of God to create all things in the beginning- God the Spirit takes the spoken Word of God (as the Gospel is preached) and *sovereignly* shines into our hearts. To do what?

... to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

This is the “unveiling” of our minds that satan has blinded. This is simply another way of understanding the Miracle of the New Birth. And once our minds are unveiled- we see. We see Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe. We see Jesus as the very Glory of God. And when we see Jesus like that- we *automatically* see the great contrast between ourselves and the Glory of Jesus- and we respond that to by abhorring our Sin; and our Wickedness; and our Worldliness. And we then respond to that- by crying out to God to forgive us; and to deliver us; and to save us from our own inherent Evil.

But the Miracle of the New Birth doesn't stop there. Once we see- we begin to *love* what we see. And as we love what we see- we are *changed* into what we see. This is what Paul meant when he said,

2Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

And all of this- the loving of Jesus; and the progressive changing- are simply human *responses* to having our minds sovereignly unveiled by God the Holy Spirit in the Miracle of the New Birth- so we can see Jesus in His Glory.

Now this is the very SAME way that every single human being- throughout all time- has been saved- even under the Old Covenant. God the Holy Spirit did a sovereign Work in them- FIRST, too. And then everything else- their loving God; their desire to obey God; and their changing into a more- godly person- followed.

But the dynamic of the First Covenant was completely different than what God is doing now. Back then- God set aside the Jew as the “envy of the world”- so that all the world would look at Israel and Jerusalem and the Jew as being God's people and God's Land and God's City. So, the First or the Old Covenant was a “Come and See” Covenant. God desired that the focus of the entire world would be on that particular section of real estate; with that particular people; in that particular city- as an example of what it meant to “chosen and loved” by God.

And that went on for many hundreds of years until Joel was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to prophesy about a *new* “Day of the Lord” that was coming upon the earth.

So, what we need to understand is that Joel's Prophecy is NOT merely about God's Spirit moving on certain people to use them. No, this is a *titanic* transition. God the Holy Spirit moving on “all flesh” is actually the End of the Old Covenant and the Birth of the Church. It is God transitioning *away* from how He had moved *on* and *in* and *through* His people for many hundreds of years- and now God opens up the entire world- so that He will move on all His chosen people- both Jews and Gentiles- out from every nation; tongue; language; and people.

And as the Old Covenant comes to an end and as the Church is birthed- the New Covenant will be a “Go and Tell” Covenant. And God's focus will shift *away* from Israel; and *away* from Jerusalem; and *away* from the Jew- and will now focus on what Joel thunders,

Joel 2:32a

And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered...

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.