

APPLYING BIBLE PROPHECY

TEXT: JOEL 2:28-32

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am going to speak this morning on applying Bible prophecy, and interpreting Bible prophecy.
2. When reading Scripture, we first have to consider the context. Then we must look for the correct interpretation.
3. And then we must make our application.
4. There can be many applications, but there is only one correct interpretation.
5. Furthermore, a large number of Bible prophecies have a near and a far fulfillment. For example, Joel's prophecy on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had a partial fulfillment on the day of Pentecost (2:28).
6. Peter said in Acts 2:16, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Peter did not say, "But this is a fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."
7. Forty-eight times in the New Testament, we read these words (or something very similar): "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet..." (cf. Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14, etc.).
8. But on the day of Pentecost, Peter didn't use that familiar formula, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," though he used it at other times (cf. Acts 1:16).
9. Joel related his prophecy to "the great and terrible day of the LORD" (2:31). Therefore, a second and more complete fulfillment is yet to come. The theme of the book of Joel is "the day of the LORD" (cf. 1:15; 2:1).

I. THE NEED FOR DELIVERANCE (2:32)

1. Joel is referring to the second coming of Christ (2:32). The "day of the LORD" (2:31) always has reference to the second coming of Christ.
2. In I Thessalonians 5:2, the apostle Paul said, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."
3. The words in Joel 2:31 are practically identical to our Lord's words in Mark 13:24 – "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light..." (Joel 2:30; 3:15).

4. These prophecies are very similar to Revelation 6:12 – “and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.”
5. Therefore, the interpretation is not difficult – “the great and terrible day of the LORD” refers to a future time when God will deal in wrath and in judgment with this wicked, sin-loving world because sinners have rejected the Word of God (cf. Isaiah 13:9-11).
6. Zephaniah 1:15 says the day of the LORD “is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”
7. At the end of the seven-year tribulation period, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to deliver those who call on His name (Joel 2:32).
8. Romans 11:26 says, “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”
9. That is the interpretation. Now, the application. The apostle Peter quoted Joel 2:32 on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:21 says, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
10. So here “deliverance” refers to salvation. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
11. Are *you* saved?
12. *Saved by His power divine,
Saved to new life sublime!
Life now is sweet and my joy is complete,
For I'm saved, saved, saved!* – Jack Scholfield
13. The apostle Paul quoted Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
14. In these Scriptures, deliverance refers to being delivered from the penalty of sin – “shall be saved.”
15. Galatians 1:4 says Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.”
16. Are *you* saved?

II. THE NEED FOR DECISION

1. Joel chapter 3 describes the judgment that will take place when Christ returns (cf. 3:12, 13). It is an important chapter on Bible prophecy.
2. “Jehoshaphat” (3:2, 12) means “the LORD judges.”
3. Joel 3:12 says, “Let the heathen be wakened,” but they have not been wakened yet. Sinners are in a deep spiritual stupor.
4. Americans spend over \$200 billion a year on alcohol! Many sinners are in a deep spiritual stupor because they are doped up on various drugs.

5. Many sinners are in a deep spiritual stupor because their minds are filled with filth – pornography, all of the garbage on television, etc. Most television programs are pro-homosexual and anti-Christian, etc.
6. Some people avoid sins like adultery and drunkenness and drugs and gambling, but they are guilty of the sin of unbelief. God is not important to them.
7. They are godless. As I go out into the neighborhood and talk to people I am saddened by all of the people who have no interest in the things of God.
8. They are very interested in money and shopping and sports and worldly things, but they are godless. Lost and on their way to hell.
9. There is a need for decision. Joshua said, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).
10. The prophet Elijah said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (I Kings 18:21).
11. Evangelist Billy Graham called his old radio show, “The Hour of *Decision*,” and when he started his own magazine, he called it “Decision Magazine.” I don’t agree with everything Billy Graham does, but I agree with his emphasis on decision.
12. On Sunday night, October 8, 1871, evangelist, D. L. Moody, preached to a very large crowd in his church in Chicago. His text that evening was from Matthew 27:22, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?”
13. At the conclusion of his sermon Moody said, “I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sunday we will come to Calvary and the Cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth.”
14. Then his song leader, Ira D. Sankey, began to lead in singing the hymn:

*Today the Savior calls;
For refuge fly;
The storm of justice falls,
And death is nigh*

15. Ira Sankey never finished his song. Outside the rush and roar of fire engines hurried by the church on the streets, and before morning much of the city of Chicago lay in ashes.
16. This was the Great Chicago Fire, and it destroyed D. L. Moody’s church, and his home, along with over three square miles of Chicago.

17. At least 300 people died in the fire that night, and to his dying day Dwight L. Moody referred to his decision to tell the people to wait before accepting Christ his “biggest blunder.”
18. Moody said he knew he’d never see that great crowd again.
19. Moody said this: “But I want to tell you of one lesson that I learned that night which I have never forgotten, and that is, when I preach, to press Christ upon the people then and there and try to bring them to a decision on the spot. I would rather have that right hand cut off than to give an audience a week now to decide what to do with Jesus.”
20. D. L. Moody’s story of his blunder before the Great Chicago fire reminds us that for some people, there may never be another opportunity to get right with God.
21. Not one of us is guaranteed another day.
22. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2).
23. The late 1800’s saw an evangelistic explosion in the country of India. Entire provinces formally closed to Christianity were opened up to the Gospel. Hundreds of missionaries from Wales, England, Australia, and the United States went to India to preach the Gospel and start churches.
24. Scores of these missionaries were martyred, but Indian pastors and evangelists continued preaching and many souls were saved.
25. During this time, a Welsh missionary who had endured severe persecution finally saw his first converts in a particularly hostile village in the Indian province of Assam.
26. A husband and wife, with their two children, professed faith in Christ and were baptized. Their village leaders decided to make an example out of the husband. Arresting the family, they demanded that the father renounce Christ, or see his wife and children murdered. When he refused, his two children were executed by archers. Given another chance to recant, the man again refused, and his wife was similarly stuck down. Still refusing to recant, the man was also executed and joined his family in heaven.
27. Witnesses later told the story to the Welsh missionary. The reports said that when he was asked to recant or see his children murdered, the man said, “I have decided to follow Jesus, and there is no turning back.”
28. After seeing his children killed, he reportedly said, “The world can be behind me, but the cross is still before me.”
29. And after seeing his wife pierced by the arrows, he said, “Though no one is here to go with me, still I will follow Jesus.”

30. According to the Welsh missionary, when he returned to the village, a revival had broken out, and those that had murdered the first converts and themselves repented and gotten saved.
31. The missionary passed along these reports to an Indian evangelist named Sadhu Singh. Singh took the martyr's last words, and put them to traditional Indian music. The song immediately became popular in Indian churches, and soon made its way to America and other countries.

*I have decided to follow Jesus;
 I have decided to follow Jesus;
 I have decided to follow Jesus;
 no turning back, no turning back.
 The world behind me, the cross before me;
 the world behind me, the cross before me;
 the world behind me, the cross before me;
 no turning back, no turning back.*

32. Don't procrastinate. Do not waver. Make up your mind to follow Jesus!

III. THE NEED FOR CLEANSING (3:18-21)

1. Joel 3:18 is a poetic description of the beauty of Israel in the millennial kingdom. That is the correct interpretation.
2. Here is the application – we all have a need for cleansing. William Cowper wrote these beautiful words:

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's
 veins;
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

3. The flowing "fountain" (Joel 3:8) is a vivid picture of the abundant blessings of God, both spiritual blessings and temporal blessings.
4. Since this fountain is referred to several times in the Bible, it is undoubtedly a literal fountain. Therefore, these prophecies must be interpreted literally, while at the same time we recognize that they symbolize great spiritual blessings. Interpretation and application!
5. In a remarkable vision, God brought the prophet Ezekiel to the door of the future millennial temple, and Ezekiel saw floods of water issuing out from under the threshold (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

6. Zechariah 14:8 says, “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea (the Mediterranean Sea), and half of them toward the hinder sea (the Dead Sea).”
7. William Kelly said, “It is a literal fact, I suppose, but highly significant of spiritual blessing at the same time. From the holy city go forth westward and eastward the waters which are destined to heal the long miseries of a world groaning under Satan’s thralldom” (*Lectures Introductory to the Bible, Minor Prophets*).
8. Psalm 46:4 says, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God...”
9. In the last chapter of the book of Revelation, the apostle John says the Lord showed him “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1, 2).

Oh, now I see the cleansing wave!
The fountain deep and wide;
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,
Points to His wounded side.
The cleansing stream I see! I see!
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me!
Oh, praise the Lord! It cleanseth me!
It cleanseth me—yes, cleanseth me. – Phoebe W. Palmer

10. There is a need for cleansing, and only God can provide that cleansing.
11. God is holy, and all men are sinners. To enter into a relationship with God, sinners must come to His fountain to be cleansed from sin. First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? – Elisha Hoffman

12. King David prayed, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2).

13. The hymn writer wrote these beautiful words:

Search me, O God,
And know my heart today;

*Try me, O Savior,
Know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be
Some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin
And set me free. – J. Edwin Orr*

13. We need cleansing.
14. We need deliverance.
15. Some here must make a decision.

CONCLUSION:

1. Joel 3:13 says, “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe...” This world is ripe for judgment.
2. Why?
3. “For their wickedness is great” (3:13b; cf. Revelation 14:14-20).
4. Today is a day of grace. Soon will come “the day of the LORD” (Joel 3:14).
5. Only God knows how much time is left before these incredible prophecies will be fulfilled.
6. Earlier, I quoted Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”