

1. Our chapter 2 verses 28-32 makes up chap. 3 in the Hebrew Bible. The phrase "it will come to pass/it will come about after" marks a major transition.
2. Joel is not the only prophet to speak about the coming of the Holy Spirit - specifically that the Spirit would be poured out upon all men.
3. Ezekiel promised that in the age to come God would by His Spirit enable people to obey God from the heart. (Ezekiel 36:26-28)
4. Isaiah foretold a day when God would pour out His Spirit in order to create a new habitation for the people of God. (Isaiah 32:14-18; 44:3-5)
5. In Joel - the gift of the Spirit is prophetic. It will allow people to prophesy, to experience revelatory dreams, and to see visions.
6. These different aspects of the future outpouring of the Spirit do not contradict but complement each other.
7. The gift of the Spirit speaks of the personal relationship that can be had with God, as in Joel, as well as the grace that enables his people to love God from the heart, as in Ezekiel.
8. It also is the distinctive sign and mark of the people of God, as in Isaiah. In short, the coming age would be an age marked by the presence of the Spirit.
9. In the New Testament - Peter begins his Pentecost sermon by quoting Joel 2:28-32 in its entirety. (Acts 2:16-21)
10. He says what you have witnessed was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This was given to answer the charge of drunkenness - it was not a comparison. (Acts 2:13 and 16)
11. However, it is obvious that not everything Joel prophesied (and that Peter spoke) came to pass that day. Also - notice the time of fulfillment. (Compare Joel 2:28 with Acts 2:17)
12. Joel spoke of dreams and visions (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17) and of the darkening of the sun and moon (Joel 2:30; Acts 2:19), but none of this took place on Pentecost.
13. So - what did Peter mean by saying that the experience of the believers that day fulfilled Joel's prophecy.
14. First of all - we need to determine how the New Testament writers interpreted Joel in light of their experience of the pouring out of the Spirit.
15. The difficulty of Peter's quotation from Joel 2 has been dealt with in a number of ways.
16. Classic covenant theology asserts that the Pentecost experience was indeed the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This position takes the signs in the sky in more of a spiritual than a literal sense.

17. Some Bible scholars suggest that the signs that accompanied Jesus' crucifixion (the darkening of the sky, Matt 27:45) fulfilled the prophecy of the darkening of the sun and moon.
18. But it is not clear how or under what interpretational guidelines the darkening of the sun and moon might be given a "spiritual" significance in the context of Peter's sermon.
19. It does not appear that Peter was calling on his audience to recall the darkness of the crucifixion or to find some "spiritual" significance in the phrase.
20. Classic dispensationalism moves in the opposite direction. It claims that the Pentecost experience did not fulfill all of Joel's prophecy.
21. Dispensationalists have argued that since the sun and moon were not darkened, Pentecost cannot be the full or partial fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32.
22. Peter cited Joel's prophecy as the reason for what was taking place in his day and as a guarantee of a future pouring out of the Spirit.
23. However - Peter said "that what the people saw" in the temple on Pentecost was exactly what Joel prophesied.
24. Peter's quote of Joel 2:30-32 cannot be ignored. The fact that Peter did quote the prophet makes it all the more important for us to deal with them.
25. Our starting point should be that the disciples, following the preaching of John the Baptist, expected the messianic era to be accompanied by two great events: the gift of the Spirit and a great day of judgment.
26. When questioned about the extent of his ministry, John consistently stated that he was not the Christ. John baptized with water, but the Christ would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16)
27. It is significant that Peter's quotation of Joel in some points differs from the Hebrew text. Most significant is the change from "it will come to pass afterward" in Joel 2:28 to "in the last days" in Acts 2:17.
28. Peter states that the gift of the Spirit was a sign of the "last days," that is, the messianic era. The great age of grace and judgment had begun, and the gift of the Spirit, Peter argued, is proof of this.
29. Peter maintained the doctrine that the messianic age in which we find ourselves is the long-awaited "last days." (1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:3)
30. Luke utilized the language and imagery of Joel throughout Acts 2:38-39 to show that the Pentecost event was the fulfillment (at least in an initial form) of the future expectations of the Old Testament prophet.