

Joel 2 :28-32 (WCF 1:1) “A Prophetic Perspective”

For the Children: When we visit family in Australia, we often bring them some presents – especially NZ chocolate. We usually give out these presents on the day we arrive. We don't keep on giving those special gifts every day we are there. But we do try to help them in other ways during our stay. The Holy Spirit gave special gifts when He was first poured out on God's people at Pentecost. Those gifts were there for a while. But once God's Word was completed, believers had everything they needed by way of messages from God. The Spirit continues to help us in many other ways, but not with new messages. **Questions:** How does the Holy Spirit continue to help us? What are some of the reasons why prophecy and speaking in tongues have now ceased? What can we learn from the warning of judgement in our text?

Introduction:

First Point: The Day of the Spirit

- 1) **After This:** The out-pouring of the Spirit is promised “after this,” after the restoration of Israel. However, as is usual with “prophetic foreshortening,” this restoration involves more than one phase. Pentecost will occur after Post-Exilic restoration of Israel, after the Lord Jesus has restored all Israel (in principle) by His work on the cross.
- 2) **The Promise of the Spirit:** The Holy Spirit was already working in OT believers, granting faith, the knowledge of God and a desire to serve and obey God. However, the Spirit would be poured out, working more abundantly in all of God's people at a deeper level. The greater extent of this work would be seen in the fact that all types of believers would receive the spirit of prophecy – young and old, male and female, even servants.
- 3) **Evidence of This Work:** One group of evidences of the Spirit's out-pouring would be the prevalence of Word-gifts (prophecy, dreams and visions). These are “modes of revelation” received in “diverse manners” (WCF 1:1). Other modes include angelic messengers, voices in the night and theophanies. Acts 2:17-21 takes the speaking in tongues at Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Tongues interpreted is another mode of revelation.
- 4) **Being Now Ceased:** Prophecy often combines things that will occur in several phases, with elements that cease and elements that continue with greater fulfillment. The Spirit has remained “poured out” upon God's people. The extraordinary *signs* of this, however, have ceased. The various modes of revelation have been fulfilled by Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). His completed Word has replaced the various other modes of revelation (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “Tongues” also had to cease after AD 70, because it was a sign of that judgement on unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:20f)

Second Point: The Day of Judgement

- 1) **Terrifying Signs of Judgement:** Joel 2:30-31 foretells the judgement of AD 70, in terms of blood, fire and smoke – symbols of invasion and siege in Israel e.g., by Assyria and Babylon. See also Is. 13:9-10, Joel 2:10 and Zeph. 1:14-16. Joel 2:30-31 is quoted in Acts 2:19-21 as a warning to Israel to repent.
- 2) **Judgement at the End:** Mt. 24 uses similar language to warn of AD 70. Many take this as signs of the end of the world, but that is not so clear. However, it is a warning that God will deal thus with all His enemies. The blood, fire and smoke of hell will be far worse than that of invasions in history.

Third Point: The Day of Salvation

- 1) **Those Who Escape:** V. 32 speaks of survivors whom the Lord calls. As another example of prophetic foreshortening, this includes the remnant who survived the destruction of the Northern Kingdom; those who returned from Babylon; those who escaped Jerusalem in AD 70; and all Jews and Gentiles who escape the final judgement through Christ – “whoever the Lord calls.”
- 2) **What to Look For:** The text is not there to get us to seek gifts that have ceased; but to look to the Lord Jesus for salvation; to rely on His completed Word as the only special revelation we have; and to expect the indwelling of His Spirit to bring us close to Him and preserve us in Him until we see Him face-to-face.

Conclusion: