

Joel 3 Chapter 2, verse 18 – Chapter 3, verse 21 - The Pity of the Lord and the Bestowal of Blessings

I have linked these two chapters together as they speak of future blessings from the Lord and will conclude our study of the Book of Joel. Next week, the first of our “Studies for Lent”.

Note that the passage chapter 2, verse 28 – 32 is quoted in full by the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost. See Acts 2, verses 14 – 21. In the Hebrew scriptures this passage is designated as chapter 3, with the Hebrew chapter 4 beginning at our 3, verse 1. This makes sense as it seems to mark a division between the future immediately after the drought / locust swarms, and the distant future after the coming of Christ the Messiah and on into the Last Days.

Chapter 2, verses 18 – 27: Blessings in the immediate future – This is the turning point of the Book.

Evidently the people responded to the prophet’s invitation. The people repented and the Lord forgave them. Verses 18 – 19:- The land itself belongs to the Lord and he will fulfil his promise of a plentiful harvest. (see Psalm 24, verse 1 and Psalm 104, verses 10 – 15)

Verse 20:- The locust swarms will be blown into the sea and destroyed. Apparently it is on historic record by Augustine of locusts being washed ashore rotting and stinking!

Verses 21 – 22:- These two verses begin with “*Fear Not*”. The Lord is in control and the promise is for a more abundant harvest than normal – see verses 24 – 25. Remember chapter 1, verse 12 about the vine and the fig tree, symbols of prosperity? See Micah 4, verse 4.

Verse 24 - 25:- The call now is to “*Be glad . . . and rejoice in the Lord, your God:*”. The coming of the early rain was proof that the Lord had indeed forgiven his people. The terrible drought and plague were over and they could look forward to a more than abundant harvest outlined in these verses.

Verses 26 – 27:- These verses seem to move towards a greater fulfilment than that immediately after the famine. Yes! The people could now “*praise the name of the Lord your God who has dealt wondrously with you.*” But – the promise that “*my people shall never again be put to shame*” (the closing sentence of both these verses) was not at that time fulfilled. It may be that the promise looks forward to the greater Day of the Lord in chapter 3.

Chapter 2, verses 28 – 32: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit – Remember that this is a complete new chapter in the Hebrew Bible, giving it an importance missing in our own. It would come easily to the memory of those first disciples gathered on the Day of Pentecost. A long awaited fulfilment of an prophecy made over 850 years before!

Verses 28 – 29:- Notice that the outpouring of the Spirit was “*. . . on all flesh:*” In Ezekiel 39, verse 29, the Lord promises to pour out his Spirit on Israel. Here in Joel, sons and daughters, young and old, even the servants, the “lower classes”, will receive the Spirit of the Lord with all his various gifts. They will indeed become witnesses to the nations.

Verses 30 – 31:- These signs are repeated again and again in scripture when referring to the coming Day of the Lord. Maybe a reminder of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be sufficient for us – see Luke chapter 21, verses 10 - 11 and 25 – 26 and Matthew 24, verse 29.

Verse 32:- “*. . . all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved:*” - Peter used this verse to preach the Gospel of Christ to the gathering on the Day of Pentecost. It will not only be “*those who dwell in Mount Zion and Jerusalem*” who escape judgement but “*among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls*”.

Chapter 3, verses 1 – 17:- Judgement on the Nations -

Verse 1:- “*In those days and at that time*” connects the gathering of the rebellious nations and foes of God’s people with “*the great and terrible Day of the Lord*” (chapter 2, verse 31).

Verses 2 - 8:- The word “*Jehoshaphat*” literally means “*the Lord’s Judgement*”. The Book of Revelation has a graphic description of this in chapter 20, verses 7 – 15. The Lord God is going to gather all the enemies of his people and there sit in judgement on them because of wrongs committed down the ages. There will indeed be a day of reckoning!

Verses 9 – 15:- A graphic poetic description of the Day of Judgement! The nations are called battle, to fight against the Lord of the Hosts of Heaven! Again compare this with the description in verses from Revelation.

Verses 16 – 21:- The Lord is a refuge to his people on this great Day of Judgement. The “*River of Life*” appears here as in Ezekiel 47, verses 1 – 12: Zechariah 14, verse 8 and Revelation 22, verses 1 – 2.

The New Jerusalem will indeed be holy, as the Lord God himself will be ever present (verse 21) . Joel is another prophet with a word of hope for us in the future!