

JOEL

Chapter 2:28-32

Introduction

In the first sermon ever preached in the Church Age, the first Scripture quoted was our text in Joel – Joel 2:28-32.

Almost two thousand years ago, God poured-out His Spirit upon one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus Christ as the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Pentecost. The account of it is in the second chapter of the Book of Acts, where you read,

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Jews who had gathered to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost rushed over to where this was occurring. They heard the followers of Jesus speaking in all of their own native languages. Some of the Jews were “amazed,” some were “perplexed,” and some mocked and accused the Christians of being drunk.

Newly filled with God’s Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter stood up and delivered the first sermon of the Church Age. Peter quoted Joel as the biblical authority for the pouring-out of the Holy Spirit.

Peter was definitely quoting Joel... **But** if you compare his quote with the text in Joel, you will notice two significant differences:

1. Joel begins by saying, “...it shall come to pass **afterward**...” Peter changes that to “...it shall come to pass in the **Last Days**...” If you have been here for our previous studies in Joel, you know that by “afterward” Joel means a specific period of time called the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is the period in Bible prophecy that begins after the Rapture of the Church and includes the Great

Tribulation, then continues with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and continues through the Millennial kingdom of heaven on earth. All of that period of time is the Day of the Lord. Peter was filled with the Spirit and was quoting Joel under the inspiration of the Spirit. He *expands* the prophecy of Joel to apply to the period of time that *precedes* the Day of the Lord, which he called the Last Days. What Joel said would happen in the Day of the Lord was *also* happening now, in the Last Days preceding the Day of the Lord.

2. The other difference that you notice between Joel and Peter's quote is that Peter stopped quoting in the middle of Joel 2:32. He stopped right after he said, "and it shall come to pass that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He stopped to emphasize that both now, in the Last Days, and in the future Day of the Lord, God pours-out His Spirit upon His followers to empower them to be His witnesses to bring the message of salvation to the world.

Peter was telling them, and us, that we are living in the Last Days and that God has promised to pour-out His Spirit upon us today just like He promised to pour-out His Spirit in the Day of the Lord. There is a **present** pouring-out of the Spirit in the Last Days in which we live, *and* there is still a **prophesied** pouring-out of the Spirit in the future Day of the Lord. Whether today or later, the Spirit is poured-out to empower believers to be witnesses and bring the message of salvation to the world.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Believe God's Promise To Pour-Out His Spirit Upon Everyone In The Day Of The Lord, and #2 Receive God's Promise To Pour-Out His Spirit Upon You In The Last Days.

#1 Believe God's Promise To Pour-Out His Spirit Upon Everyone In The Day Of The Lord

According to Hebrew scholar Dr. Charles Feinberg, these five verses are actually a separate chapter in the Hebrew Old Testament. They are considered chapter three, and what we call chapter three is chapter four. Chapter and verse distinctions are somewhat arbitrary; they are not inspired, nor are they are part of the original

manuscripts. Nevertheless, you can see the importance even the Jews put upon these verses by designating them a separate chapter.

Joel was the first of the writing prophets, and he was the first to introduce the subject of the Day of the Lord. When he said “it shall come to pass afterward,” he was still describing the Day of the Lord which begins after the Church is Raptured. It begins with the darkness of the Great Tribulation period.

When, exactly, will God pour-out His Spirit during the Day of the Lord? It happens both *during* and *after* the Great Tribulation:

1. It happens during the Great Tribulation as God’s Spirit empowers 144,000 Jewish evangelists to preach the Gospel to the whole world.
2. It happens after the Great Tribulation, when Jesus Christ returns in His Second Coming and sets-up a one-thousand year kingdom of heaven on earth.

Joel 2:28 “...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

Joel 2:29 “And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

We have a tendency to get caught-up in the particular manifestations of being filled with God’s Spirit that are here described – prophecy, dreams, and visions. The point is that believers will experience the filling of God’s Spirit.

You must understand that being filled with God’s Spirit was something unusual in the Old Testament. For example: In the Book of Numbers there is an incident in which 70 elders of Israel were chosen to aid Moses in leading the nation. These men received the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy. Moses commented,

Numbers 11:29 “... Oh, that all the LORD’S people were prophets *and* that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!”

In the Old Testament period the empowering of the Spirit was not the common gift of God to all His people. It was not until Joel that this became a promise for every believer.

Don't misunderstand me: People were saved in the Old Testament. But their relationship with the Holy Spirit did not include His constant filling them.

Do you see now why this is a separate chapter in the Hebrew Old Testament? It promises something which we tend to almost take for granted. It promises a constant pouring-out of the Holy Spirit upon all believers, not just a few at certain special times.

Joel 2:30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

Joel 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

You read about these things in greater detail in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, in chapters six through nineteen. Joel was describing events that are yet future, that will occur during the Great Tribulation. He took great pains to establish the time period he was discussing. During and after the Great Tribulation, in the Day of the Lord, God will pour-out His Spirit.

Joel 2:32 "And it shall come to pass *that* whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls."

The Great Tribulation will be so terrible that we have a tendency to focus on its *particulars* rather than on its *purpose*. It will bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ! It will be perhaps the greatest time of evangelism the world has ever known! Bible commentator J. Vernon McGee said,

"When Christ comes to the earth to establish His kingdom, there is going to be the greatest time of individuals turning to God that the world has ever seen. Also during the Tribulation Period there will be a great turning to the Lord - much greater than there has been during the church age. "1

Joel was telling his readers that God would pour-out His Spirit upon all believers to empower their lives and ministries. This is why Peter chose these verses on the Day of Pentecost. The promise of the Spirit for the Day of the Lord *was* and *is* also present in the Last Days.

1McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

#2 Receive God's Promise To Pour-Out His Spirit Upon **You** In The Last Days

Peter was filled with the Spirit. He was preaching the Gospel. The listeners interrupted him to ask, "What shall we do?" He answered, saying,

Acts 2:38 "... Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

He emphasized that they would "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," and that it was a gift given to **all** who believed. God's promise in Joel was now present – **all** believers could be filled with God's Spirit! Joel's prophecy will still be fulfilled in the future; but Peter expands upon it to include the Last Days.

The Last Days began with the first coming of Jesus Christ and continue through the Church Age in which we live. The writer of the Book of Hebrews starts out by saying,

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

Hebrews 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son...

We're living in the Last Days, prior to the Day of the Lord. The promise of the Holy Spirit to empower is now present. Peter is the first example of what God intends for all believers. He was an uneducated fisherman. He had followed Jesus, but then denied Him three times. After Jesus rose from the dead, Peter went back to being a fisherman for a time – even though Jesus had told him years before that he would be a "fisher of men." But now here he was, filled with God's Spirit, preaching the Gospel and seeing three thousand souls saved!

The Spirit is poured-out to empower believers to be witnesses and bring the message of salvation to the world.

Pastor Chuck Smith, in his book *Living Water*, writes,

"I am convinced that the greatest need in the church today is a renewal of teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Only then will you and I be empowered to go into the world as effective

witnesses for Jesus Christ. The only hope for our nation today is a spiritual awakening that begins in the church with a fresh movement of the Holy Spirit upon the lives and hearts of the saints of God. And that takes...the baptism with the Holy Spirit."²

Pastor Chuck says that the fresh movement of the Holy Spirit we so desperately need "takes the baptism with the Holy Spirit." You can call it the baptism with the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, or the filling of the Spirit³; the expression is not as important as the experience.

There is an experience taught in Scripture that goes by these several names. It is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is *separate* and *distinct* from salvation. It is one thing to be born of the Spirit; it is yet another to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. It is the experience with the Holy Spirit by which the Holy Spirit comes upon you to empower you for your witness and service.

Prior to salvation God the Holy Spirit is with you as an unbeliever, seeking to lead you to saving faith in Jesus:

John 14:16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever;

John 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

God the Holy Spirit was "with you" seeking to lead you to faith in Jesus Christ. When You are born again of the Spirit, He comes "in you." After the resurrection of Jesus the Spirit came into the disciples and they were born again:

John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The word "receive" is in the present tense. They were at this time receiving the indwelling Spirit of God. The obvious and correct meaning of these words is that the disciples received the Holy Spirit at this point - He came into them.

²*Living Water*, p.263.

³Also "promise"; see Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4, 17; 4:31; 8:15-18; 9:17; 10:44; 11:15-16; 19:6

Yet it wasn't until **after** this event that Jesus promised His disciples the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus told those who were born of the Spirit to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism with the Spirit. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. That means the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred *after* their being born again.

There are other passages that confirm the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a separate experience from salvation. Paul the Apostle, for example, was born of the Spirit on the road to Damascus, but didn't receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit until Ananias laid his hands on him. The people of Samaria, in Acts chapter eight, were born of the Spirit, but didn't receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit until Peter and John prayed for them. In Acts chapter nineteen the disciples of John at Ephesus were born of the Spirit, then subsequently received the baptism with the Holy Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them.

The Holy Spirit is **with** you before you are a believer, seeking to lead you to Jesus; He comes **in** you at the moment of salvation, and you are born of the Spirit. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is His coming **upon** you. It is the experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon you to empower you for your witness and service.

How is this baptism with the Holy Spirit received? **It is received by faith as you simply ask for it!**

In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter Eleven and verses nine through thirteen, Jesus says,

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:11 "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he* asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

Luke 11:12 "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

Luke 11:13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Who are you to "ask...seek...[and] knock" for in these verses? God the Holy Spirit.

And **who** is it that "asks...seeks...[and] knocks" for God the Holy Spirit? A *son*, a child of God! Those who have *already* been born again and in whom God the Holy Spirit indwells are instructed and even urged to *go on asking* for God the Holy Spirit to be poured out **upon** their lives!

You are *already* a son or a daughter when you ask; God is *already* your Father in heaven. From heaven He desires to pour His Spirit upon you in greater measure.

What hinders your asking? Two things:

1. Many believers go to great lengths, even taking Scripture out of context, to prove that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not an experience you should ever ask to receive.
2. Others are hindered in their asking because they expect or desire some supernatural sign that God has answered their prayer...

Don't let these things hinder your asking! Ask in faith that God would baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and then receive by faith His promise to you. It is His dynamic power falling upon you, then overflowing from you, that brings boldness and power to your witness and service for Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Is the Holy Spirit *with* you or is He *in* you?

If He is in you, is your Christian witness and service characterized by self-effort or by supernatural power?

Your answer will determine your asking. Ask Jesus to baptize you with the Holy Spirit; have faith in the promise of the Spirit; walk by faith in the power of the Spirit.