



## Joel

### **Get Started**

On December 14, 2012, 20-year-old Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members in a mass murder at Sandy Hook Elementary School in the village of Sandy Hook in Newtown, Connecticut.

Not too long ago ninety tornadoes in twelve states ripped across rural America killing at least thirty-eight people.

What do these tragedies, and others like them, have in common?

They have in common that Christian leaders announced they were God's judgment upon America for our sins.

It's popular, has been for a long time, to give God 'credit,' as it were, for tragedies. I don't see it. Here is why. If it **is** judgment, shouldn't it begin with the house of God - with believers?

And didn't God tell His good friend Abraham that He would spare Sodom if there were even ten believers in it?

Look at it this way. Saying a certain tragedy is God's judgment is, to me, tantamount to prophesying for The Lord. Are these leaders modern day prophets?

I don't think it's healthy to play prophet and announce when a disaster or tragedy is God's direct intervention. Let us rather show compassion in a suffering world.

There have been disasters attributed by genuine prophets to God's judgment of nations and of His own people. The prophet Joel recounts one and then uses it to beg for his people to repent.

## **Get Studying**

A terrible locust plague struck the southern kingdom of Judah. It was the fiercest anyone could remember. Every green thing was stripped and destroyed. Joel made it clear that this was a judgment from God upon a people backsliding in their relationship with Him.

Joel begins by reviewing the plague they had just experienced.

Joe 1:4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

Joel 1:7 He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white.

They were as terrifying as they were destructive. They destroyed the vineyards and the fig orchards. They stripped the bark right off the trees.

One group of people is singled out to give an example of the effect the locusts had upon daily life:

Joe 1:5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you drinkers of wine, Because of the new wine, For it has been cut off from your mouth.

No vineyards, no grapes; no grapes, no wine; no wine, only whining from the winos!

It's interesting that drunkenness is the first sin Joel mentions in his book, and drunkards are the first group of people you encounter. Apparently the nation suffered from alcohol abuse.

The prophet calls the nation to action:

Joe 1:13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sackcloth, You who minister to my God; For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God.

Joe 1:14 Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land Into the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD.

It's a call to spiritual action. Spiritual action ought to be priority one with us as believers. I have no problem with other action, e.g., political action. But it must be secondary to spiritual action, or we are just spinning our wheels.

Joel gives the plague a name. He calls it the Day of The Lord.

Joe 1:15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel makes mention of the Day of the Lord five times in his book. He is the prophet who introduces this theme in the Bible.

The Day of the Lord is a very technical phrase when used by the prophets. It is the whole period of time beginning with God's dealing with the nation of Israel after the rapture of the Church at the beginning of the Great Tribulation and extending through the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and His one thousand year reign on the earth unto the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

Joel refers to the locust plague as the Day of The Lord because he will use it as an illustration of that future judgment.

In chapters two and three Joel chronicles the future invasion of the land. He then indicates that at its darkest moment, when it looks as though not only Israel but the entire human race will be wiped out, The Lord returns.

Joe 3:15 The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness.

Joe 3:16 The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

The Lord will return to save His people. It's the Second Coming, ending the Great Tribulation just in time, and ushering in the kingdom of God on the earth for a thousand years.

Afterwards God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh:

Joe 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

Joe 2:29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

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

Joe 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.

Joe 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.

In this Millennial Kingdom all needs will be provided for as The Lord transforms the planet:

Joe 2:21 Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things!

Joe 2:22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.

Joe 2:23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you - The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month.

Joe 2:24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

Joe 2:25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

Joe 2:26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

Joe 2:27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

The book ends on a high note with God promising He will, in the future, establish Israel forever:

Joe 3:18 And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias. Israel will be established forever and The Lord will reign over them:

Joe 3:20 But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation.

Joe 3:21 For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Contemplating what they'd just been through - a locust plague - and anticipating what a future generation would go through - the Great Tribulation - was intended to lead them to repentance at the goodness of God in loving them enough to discipline them for their own good.

## **Get Spiritual**

You probably recognized at least one passage I read. In the first sermon ever preached in the Church Age, the first Scripture quoted was our text in Joel – Joel 2:28-32.

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

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 baptized 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...” Peter was quoting Joel under the inspiration of the Spirit. He explains the prophecy in Joel of God pouring out the Spirit also applies to the period of time that precedes the Great Tribulation. It was happening now.

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 because there is now a gap before God establishes Israel again. That gap is us, the church.

There is a present pouring-out of the Spirit right now upon the church, and there is still a prophesied pouring-out of the Spirit in the future.

Whether today or later, the Spirit is poured-out to empower believers to be witnesses and bring the message of salvation to the world.

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 Pentecost that this became a promise for every believer.

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.

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 encourage us to receive it.

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!

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.

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.