

Sunday, August 6, 2023

Joel 1:1 | Study Guide pp. 1-11 | The Word that Came from God

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV

Hook

Story

Last week, we finished a 16-week study of 2 Timothy. And one thing I want to remind us of from that study—that will lead us into this next study—comes from 2 Timothy 3:16-17, where Paul told Timothy that “*All* Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man or woman of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

This week we are beginning a nine-week study of the book of Joel—an Old Testament, Minor Prophet. And we are doing this because we believe that *all* Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable to teach us, to admonish us, to correct us, and to train us. We are doing this because we believe that Joel can be used by God to make us wise unto salvation, complete us, and equip us for every good work.

If I can just be honest, and I think I can speak for both us, I'll say that Daniel are really more comfortable teaching from the New Testament. We're more familiar with the New Testament. We're more confident in the New Testament. This is because we're New Covenant believers pastoring a New Covenant Church. But if we claim to be so confident in the New Testament that says all Scripture is able to sanctify us, then we should logically then be confident in the Old Testament and a relatively unknown prophet to teach us in the way of the Lord.

If we neglected the Old Testament and only taught from the New Testament, I don't think we would be right handlers of the word of God...For we would really only be right handlers of half of it. So that's why we're going to Joel. We're going to teach and preach Joel to the best of our ability. We're going to pray. And we're going to see God show off. We're going to witness him use this three chapter book to transform us from one degree of glory to the next. Daniel and I are excited to see him work through his word.

If you look at Pages 5 and 6 of your guide, I want to start by walking you through the structure of our Bible. For some this might not be anything new, but for some, seeing how the Bible fits together might be very helpful. So let's begin with the fact that our Bible is the story of God. And our Bible tells the Story of God in four movements: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration (or consummation). This story of God is about how God created all things for his glory, how sin entered into his world, how God worked to redeem his fallen creation, and how he restores his creation to a right relationship with him through his Son, Jesus Christ. Our Bible—our Book, made up of 66 books, is broken up into two books—or two testaments, or two covenants.

The Old Testament which has 39 books, tells the story of how God created mankind, of how mankind fell into sin through the deception of the serpent, of how mankind fell into a broken relationship with God, and of God's plan to redeem and restore his people through the seed of the woman by crushing the head of that serpent who is the devil. The Old Testament is made up of four books: The Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy), The History (Joshua-Esther), The Writings/Wisdom Literature (Job-Song of Solomon), and The Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi). The prophets are divided into two groups—major and minor. The major prophets are not better than the minor prophets, the minor prophets' writings are just shorter than the the major prophets.

Hosea through Malachi (who are the minor prophets of the Bible are also known as "The Twelve." These twelve prophets make up one book of the Hebrew Scriptures. Joel is one of These Twelve. And they all preach the same thing: the judgement of God your

Creator is coming because of your unfaithfulness to the covenant. Repent and God will restore you.

The New Testament which has 27 books (Matthew through Revelation) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. These 27 books tell of the coming of the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and all the other authors of the New Testament tell of how Jesus came to redeem fallen humanity and to commission his redeemed to make disciples of all nations. It also tells of a day when he will come again to judge the living and the dead. The unfaithful will perish. The faithful will be saved.

There are many words of God that make up this Word of God, but we're going to look at three this morning. And these three words are going to help us in our understanding of this little three chapter prophecy called Joel. So let me give you our outline for this morning.

We're going to begin by first looking at the word that came from God to Moses. Secondly, we'll look at the word that from God to Joel. And we'll end our time looking at the word that came from God to us. (Repeat)

Look

- So first, let's look at the word that came from God to Moses. There are really two words, or two passages of Scripture from the Law of Moses that we need to keep in mind when studying the book of Joel.
- The first is Deuteronomy 28 (let's turn there in our bibles). In Deuteronomy 28, (one of the last times Moses speaks to the people of Israel before he dies) Moses promises the people of God blessings for covenant faithfulness and curses (or consequences) for covenant unfaithfulness in their relationship to God. He says in Deuteronomy 28:1-2, "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God." Then he goes on in verses 3-14 to describe these blessings. He goes onto say in Deuteronomy 28:15, "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you." Then he goes on in verses 16-68 to describe these curses. He talks about three categories of curses. In verses 20-24, he tells them that the LORD will cause natural disasters to come upon them. In verses 25-35, he tells them that the LORD will cause their

enemies to come upon them. And if that were not enough, in verses 36-44, he tells them that the LORD himself would come upon them. He says in verses 45, “All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you.” That’s the first passage we need to keep in mind when we are studying Joel.

- The second is Exodus 34 (let’s turn there). In Exodus 34:6-7, the LORD proclaims his name to Moses. He passes before him and declares, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...(6-7)." This name echoes throughout the rest of the Bible. And this name shows up in the middle of this book, of Joel. It is the name of the covenant-keeping God of Israel. It is the name that reminds us that even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. It is the name of our God who is slow to anger but who also, eventually expresses his anger toward sin. It is the name of our God who is gracious and merciful...giving us what we don’t deserve and withholding what we do deserve.
- This brings us to the next word—the word of God that came to Joel (so let’s go back to Joel). And as we see in chapter 1, verse 1, this book is “The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.” Now let’s talk about the messenger and his message.
 - The messenger.
 - Joel is a prophet. And a prophet, says Paul House, “is a corrective person primarily....The prophets talked about sin, covenant-breaking, relational breaches between God and His people in very personal terms....The prophets preached sin, and they preached judgment for the same reason the New Testament people do—to effect repentance and change. [A prophet’s message] isn’t a statement of doom that nothing can be done about. It’s if you have ears to hear, as Jesus put it, listen and repent.” We don’t know much about this prophet Joel. What we do know is that his name is Joel and his father’s name is Pethuel. Now anytime you see “el” at the beginning or end of a name in the Old Testament, it is referring to God. El is the Hebrew word for God. For example, El-Shaddai means God Almighty, Beth-el means house of God, Ezeki-el means strength of God, Pethu-el (Joel’s father) means opening of God, vision of God, or mouth of God, and Joel, or Jo-el, or Yo-el means Yahweh is God. And that’s his main message.

- His message.

- Joel's main message to the people of Israel is that Yahweh is God. Or we could say it like this. Joel's main message to the unfaithful people of Israel is that their God is Yahweh—the faithful, covenant keeping God. He is (Exodus 34) the LORD the LORD, or Yahweh Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.” This is their God.

- Now the people of Israel at this time, they are guilty. They have (Deuteronomy 28) been unfaithful to Yahweh. They have been unfaithful to their faithful God. They have not been careful to do all his commandments. And since Yahweh does not clear the guilty, they have recently experienced judgement, or a curse, or a consequence for their sin. A recent day of the LORD—a day for the LORD—a day to bring his people back to the LORD—has just come upon them in the form of a natural disaster. A natural disaster (which Moses promised) has recently come upon them. An army of locusts has invaded the land like an army of men. They have destroyed everything. So Joel calls them to repent! Turn back to the LORD and he will be gracious to you. He will restore you. That's chapter one. If you don't (chapter two) an army of men will invade the land like an army of locusts. But “even now,” declares the LORD through the prophet Joel, “return to me with all your heart...Rend your hearts, not your garments. Repent inwardly, not merely outwardly. Return to the LORD your God, (Joel directly quotes Exodus 34), for the LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. If you do this, Joel makes a promise based on the LORD character, that “the LORD will become jealous for his land and have pity on his people.” He will restore them. He will remove the invading armies. “And it shall come to pass afterward,” the LORD declares through Joel in chapter two, “that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy (they shall call people to repentance), your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit....And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Locusts

- And that brings us to the word of God that came to us—his name is Jesus Christ.

- Jesus, just like any other book of the Old Testament, is the fulfillment of the book of Joel. He is (according to John 1 — lets turn there) the Word of God. This Word

of God came to the people of God (verse 11). To all who received this Word (verses 12-13), they received a blessing. They received “the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” They receive the blessing of adoption and restoration for Jesus (according to John the Baptist in John 1:29) is: “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!...John bore witness in John 1:32-34: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water (that’s God) said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with (or pour out) the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

Book

- Peter says in his first epistle that when prophets prophesied in the Old Testament. They were speaking about “the grace that was to be [y]ours.” He says that when prophets (like Joel) spoke, it was actually the Spirit of Christ in them predicting (or speaking beforehand) the sufferings of Christ and the blessings that would follow. He says that the prophets (like Joel) were not serving themselves, but us who have had the gospel of Jesus preached to us. So what Joel is doing here is predicting God’s salvation of his people through Jesus Christ. Peter says in Acts 2 that Pentecost was the fulfillment of the prophet Joel. Jesus came to live a perfectly faithful life to God to be punished for our unfaithfulness to God. He was “delivered up (as a sacrificial Lamb of God) according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.” He was slaughtered. He was crucified and killed on a tree, on a cross. Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree. He was cursed for us. And He redeemed us from the curse associated with unfaithfulness to God by becoming a curse for us—so that in Christ Jesus we might receive blessings. The blessing of becoming children of God and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. He was judged for us. He took the wrath of God for us. He received the consequence of our unfaithfulness for us. He was buried and he was raised from the dead three days later. And after ascending to the Father, and sitting at his right hand, he now pours out his Spirit on any person who repents of their sin and receives him. That’s why Peter concludes his sermon in Acts 2 like a prophet! Like Joel he says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive” the Joel 2 “gift of the Holy Spirit.” This “promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” This is because the Lord the Lord is (Exodus 34) “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and

faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

- Today, all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. All who repent and are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. They will be delivered from destruction. And they will receive the Holy Spirit to help them remain faithful to God. All who do not repent, they still have a destruction awaiting them. The LORD himself will come upon them (Deuteronomy 28; Joel 3). They will be trampled in the vintage as grapes of his wrath. They will come to the valley of Jehoshaphat, the valley of judgement and receive their due reward. Remember from 2 Timothy—he is coming to judge the living and the dead. And as Paul says in Romans 2:6-8 that “he will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality (that’s us—the living—who have been saved by faith in Jesus) he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (that’s the dead—those who have not been saved by faith in Jesus—those who are unfaithful to God) there will be wrath and fury.”
- In summary, the Word of God that came to Joel is a fulfillment of the Word of God that came to Moses in Deuteronomy 28 and Exodus 34. The Word of God that came to us in the person of Jesus Christ is *the* fulfillment of both Moses and Joel.

Took

○ GITKOG

- The day of the LORD is coming. This is what Joel declares. And it will either be a day of hope and healing or a day of dread and death for every single person on this earth. The Judge is standing at the door. He is ready to appear to judge the living and the dead. He will come like a thief in the night at a time when we don’t expect. Until that day (Acts 17:30-31) he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given us assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

○ BF

- So if you have been unfaithful to your faithful God, humble yourself and repent. Even now (as Joel says)! It’s not too late! For today is the day of salvation! Return to the Lord with all you heart and bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Is there anyone in here right now who wants to repent and come to the Lord who is

gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, who forgives all your sin? Raise your hand if that's you!

- For those in here who have called on the name of the Lord and have been saved and are being saved. I want to remind you that there is still a terrible judgement coming for your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, your family members, and your baristas, who remain unfaithful to God. But remember, all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they to call on him in whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? Therefore I charge you again from 2 Timothy 4:1-2 — in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom; **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season. Be filled like a juicy orange with the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**
- The LORD the LORD is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.” Do you believe this? Then after singing and taking communion, let's leave here and live accordingly.

Let's pray.