

A Study of Joel 2:18-27

¹⁸ Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ¹⁹ The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. ²⁰ "I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. ²¹ "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! ²² Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³ "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. ²⁴ "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. 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 again be put to shame. ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

To understand this section of Joel, we must look back at the previous section that begins with a description of the judgment and ends with a call to repentance.

¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "

The priests are speaking for the people. If the repentance is sincere and thorough, what do the words of the priest indicate has changed about the people and their attitude toward their plight?

This change is why there is a dramatic shift in Joel. Judgment is still coming, but God promises a coming day when God will more than restore His people. Some of this will be done in the way that we commonly think of as supernatural. But much of this will happen because the people are being obedient to the covenant out of their love for God.

In verse 18, what does Joel mean by "the LORD became jealous"? In what sense is God jealous? What does this tell us about God?

Much of this section is a "reversing of the curses" that had been part of the judgment in the previous two chapters. What verses from chapters 1 and 2 are the following verses "reversing"?

Verse 19

Verse 20

Verse 21

Verse 22

Verse 23

Verse 24

Verse 25

Verse 26

The Hebrew of verse 23 offers some interesting possibilities, as one commentator explains. The phrase translated as “the early rain for your vindication/righteousness” or the “autumn rain” can also be translated as “teacher of righteousness.” Before and during the time of Jesus on earth, the Qumran community (who were responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls) interpreted this to mean that a teacher of righteousness would come before the overthrow of the Romans. But in Joel’s time, which is the proper translation? Here are a couple of things to consider:

- “Autumn rain” fits the context of reversing the curses better than “teacher.”
- Vindication or righteousness does not really apply to rain. It seems more consistent with teacher.

Could it mean both? To make the case for that possibility, we would expect to see some connection between rain/water and teaching/righteousness or drought and ignorance. Also, we would expect to see the promise of such a teacher. What do we see in these Scriptures?

Deuteronomy 18:15, 34:10

1 Kings 8:35-36

Isaiah 30:20-33

Hosea 6:3, 10:12

Isaiah 45:8

Verse 26 provides the attitude that the people should have in the midst of prosperity. What is that attitude?

Verse 27 gives the ultimate blessing (one which humanity and the people of Israel had rejected before). What is that blessing?

What happens to God’s people when they no longer value this blessing?