

# Joel 2:18-32

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[ 0 : 00 ] Fear. People's lives are dominated by fear. Fear of the everyday things of life. We're! We're terrified of them, aren't we? I've got an essay to do by next week. I've got an! exam to do. I don't have enough money. Payday is not until a couple of weeks. I've not got friends. I'm not sure I'll keep my job in the next cuts. Is my work secure? Fear about safety.

Fear about health. And as we grow older we fear age. And then we face the final fear of death. Fear sells our newspapers, doesn't it? The economy is going to go bust. Immigration. Do you remember that? The Bulgarians and the Romanians are coming. Well, where are they? Six months later. Fear of leaving your child alone on the internet. We live in fear. And what God promises in chapter 2 and verse 21 of Joel is, fear not, O land.

Fear not. Fear not. Verse 21. Fear not you beasts of the field. Or look what he promises in chapter 2 and verse 19 at the end. I will make, I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. Or then in verse 26 it says, you shall eat in plenty. My people will never again be put to shame. And again, in verse 26, 27. My people shall never again be put to shame. God promises his people a land of no fear and no shame. No fear and no shame.

A land that is based on the great things that the Lord Jesus Christ has done. A land where God's people will never be mocked. They will never be persecuted. A land where no one will ever deny that the Lord Jesus is the rightful King of his creation. A land where no one will ever accuse a Christian of being bigoted or misguided and try to thrust them to the edge of society. A land where no Christian will ever be ashamed of their Lord. No fear and no shame.

[ 2 : 03 ] Never again. That is the land that is promised in Joel chapter 2. A land of no fear and never again. So where are we in this passage? We're about 900 BC. So how do we know that something written 900 BC before Christ is about Jesus? Well let me try and explain to you how Old Testament prophecy works. As we look at the Old Testament, those of us who live after the Lord Jesus, we know it's all about him. How do we know that prophecy in the Old Testament is all about him? Because he told us. Luke 24, 44. He says, everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Which is basically the whole of the Old Testament.

So as we read it, we must think, what does this teach me about the Lord Jesus? And when we come to any passage in the Old Testament, but particularly prophecy, there is first of all what it meant for the people then. What did it mean for the people of Joel's day? How did they understand it? What was their historical situation? But we also know that it points us forward to Jesus' first coming when Jesus came to earth. It tells us, it fulfills us about what Jesus did when he was born and lived and died and rose again and he ascended. But there is a third level to prophecy. There's historical what it meant to the people then.

There is Christ's first coming. And then there is Christ's second coming, isn't it? The Lord Jesus will return to judge the world. So whenever you read a bit of the Bible, think on those three levels. What does it mean to the people then? What does it say about Jesus' first coming?

What does it say about Jesus' second coming? So this was written to the southern kingdom of God's people. Israel has been divided into two. Israel to the south and Judah to the north.

It's about 9th century BC. And it's going to point us forward to what the Lord Jesus has done for us when he comes the first time. And what he will do for us when he comes the second time. Now the good thing is, the second part of the passage is preached on by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2. So we can see how it's applied. But the first half is a little bit more tricky.

[ 4 : 21 ] So let's try and have a go with that. Verses 18 to 27. My first point is what about the promised land? Now we ended last week in Joel chapter 2 with the priests of God's people making a cry on behalf of his people. Remember these people, they've been infested by locusts.

There's a huge plague of locusts. There's no food anywhere for anyone to eat. It's verse 17. I try to find Jose and Joel, isn't it? Joel chapter 2 in verse 17. Let me read it to you. It says this. Why should they say among the peoples, where is their God?

And it's a cry based on the honour of God's name. Look God, you're going to look ridiculous if you don't help your covenant people. And it is prayer centred on God's glory. And that is answered. It is a prayer that they can make with confidence because it's God's character to have compassion. Look at what he says in verse 18. Then the Lord became jealous for his land. It isn't the insane jealousy of a boyfriend who's mad that his girlfriend is texting a male colleague at work. It is the jealousy of a tender creator who looks at what he has made and who is grieved to see it suffering both his land and his people. So never think that God doesn't care. He is a jealous God. But the God who cares is powerful to act. He's a bit like a loving parent. So the mum will speak to a child who is ill and say, it'll be soon over. It'll be soon over, little one. And that is what God tells his people. It will be soon over. God tells his people, won't he, how it will be soon over. Verse 19.

The Lord answered and says to his people, behold, I'm sending you grain, wine and oil and you will be satisfied. And I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. Verse 20. I will remove the northerner 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. I'm going to restore the cross. You will be physically satisfied. I'm going to restore your honour, Judah, and you will be emotionally satisfied. I'm going to restore your borders. I'm going to defeat your enemies. You will be politically secure. Now those verses could refer to the locusts. If you see that stench and foul smell, rotting arthropod is the posh word for locusts, isn't it? And they would smell. It could refer maybe to the northern nations to restore God's people. So we know, don't we, later on that the Assyrians swept down from the north and they destroyed Israel. Or later the Babylonians came and they destroyed the southern kingdom and they were taken into exile. But God says it will not last forever. It could be a promise of that. The language of Joel 19 verse 19. Do you see it now? I will no more. I will no more make your approach among nations. Or look at verse 26. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

[ 7 : 47 ] And so I think that's important. There's a time when they will be fully satisfied. When their enemies will be completely destroyed. This is the time of never again. And so you read your Old Testament and you find out about what happened when they came back from exile and it wasn't like that at all. Here Joel is saying there is a time when the problems of the past will be just that. They will be problems of the past. And the future, well it will be filled, won't it? Look at verse 27. You will know that I'm in the midst of Israel and I am the Lord your God and there is none else. There is no other God. You don't find that in the history of the Old Testament. This is a perfect promised land. It's not just a new Israel but a new creation. Where people can enjoy rest and they can enjoy a perfect relationship with God. And they can enjoy all the perfect blessings of the world that he made. And look at how they respond in verse 21. Be glad and rejoice. Look at verse 22.

Don't you love it? Even the animals. Even the dogs. Even your cat won't be afraid because there's so much to eat. The whole of created order is at peace. There's no foot and mouth. There's no famine. There's no drought. There's no swine flu.

Swine all for human beings. And there's no more regrets. Do you see that verse 25? It is a remarkable verse isn't it? I will restore to you the years that the swarming locusts have eaten. The hopper, the destroyer, the cutter, my great army which I sent among you.

The years in which I sent my punishment says God. The years that you lost through your disobedience. The wilderness years. I'm going to repay you. You're going to get them again. Isn't that an amazing thing? In God's perfect world you will get the wilderness years back.

When you've been there 10,000 years bright shining as the sun. You've no less days to sing God's praise than when you first began. Doesn't your heart ache for a life like this?

[ 9 : 48 ] Not just for when you're physically satisfied. But where you're emotionally secure. Where the fear of rejection has disappeared. You're not just guilt free but the shame that you know before others and before your God. And even the shame that you feel yourself while it's a thing of the past. But you are spiritually, physically complete because you know that the Lord your God is the only God and he has worked wonders for you. He sent his one and only son to rescue you. This is the life God promises his people. And if you're not a Christian this afternoon, you need to understand this is the life you're rejecting. You are rejecting it because you are rejecting the God who it is centred on. Because it's important to see that in this new world that God promises, this is not a

world of self-satisfaction. The new creation is about finding satisfaction in the only place that it is promised. In the Lord. Do you see that verse 21? For the Lord has done great things. Heaven is only heaven because people are focused on the Lord Jesus. Fear is shattered and joy is given. And when you realise that the Lord has done great things, verse 23, be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice. Rejoice in what?

In your circumstances? In how good looking you are? In your wealth? In your job? No, in the Lord your God. Not in good fortune. In God's promised land in the future, we will not be feeling great about ourselves. We will be feeling great about our God. And that is the future for everyone who trusts in Jesus. His promise is because he's risen from the dead, we will rise from the dead. And we will live in this perfect world with him forever. And in fact, do you know wonderfully, as you go back to the office this afternoon, you can experience just a taste of those blessings now. See Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3, it's on your sheet. Paul says that the realities of the future are ours. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly realms, already blessed us. We already have it. It is ours. It's in the accounts. We're seated in the heavenly places. It is in the future, waiting for us to inherit, but it is certain. So we taste something of heaven now. This life without fear. By looking to the great things that the Lord has done for us. And there is a reason why everyone in heaven is looking to Jesus. In Revelation, it tells us where everybody looks in heaven. And they're looking for the throne of the Lamb.

In God's future new world, they're not looking at each other. They're not looking at themselves and their evil gating. They're looking at Jesus. The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land. And they know that they are loved because he is the Lamb that was slain. And they see the scars that declare his love that he went to the cross for them. And when you are looking at him, you know that you're secure, don't you? When you're looking at him, you know that you are secure. Not because of their job or their bank balance, but because they're looking at the God of heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus Christ who has promised you this morning he will never leave you nor forsake you. And when they're looking at him, they know they are safe because the Lord Jesus says, I will dwell with you. And so today, this afternoon, in glorious healing, you can have a taster of the perfect land now. If you will do what you will be doing in eternity, which is looking to the Lord Jesus who has done great things to you. And that is how not to be afraid today. To begin to experience the never again. Joel tells us next, how does God empower you to do that? How on earth can you do that this afternoon? You say to me, well you don't know what my boss is like. You don't know what it's like working in that council. Well, the promised spirit. Secondly, the promised spirit. There's a problem for the people of Joel's day. And the problem was this. They could only have the land of blessing only when they kept God's side of God's covenant promises. Do you remember what he said when he rescued his people out of Egypt? I've got it on the sheet, Deuteronomy 28.1. 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. Wonderful promises, but where's the problem? If you obey. Isn't that the problem? Because they couldn't obey, could they, for more than two verses in the Bible, it seems to me and you. So last week we saw their common experience was not Deuteronomy 28.1, was it? That wasn't their experience. [14:38] Their experience was 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. What are the curses like? Locusts.

And lots of them. That's the problem. So how is this people of disobedience in Joel's day? You're going to become a people of obedience in a blessed land. Well God promises something for the future. In verse 28 it says, 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 and your young men shall see visions. Now again, think about what did it mean for the people of that day? Back in the Old Testament, God's spirit was only given to particular people at particular times for particular jobs. So it was given to kings.

And it was given to the judges. And it was given to the prophets. It wasn't given to the ordinary Joe. They didn't get the spirit in the same way. But God says, now all of my people.

Do you notice that? I'm going to pour out my spirit, even in verse 29, on my servants. There's going to be no half measures. All my people have the spirit. And you notice it is a pouring out. It's not a

dribbling out. All of God's people. There's no sexism. There's no ageism.

There's no classism. There's no racism. From the greatest to the least, they will be awash with the Holy Spirit. And what is the effect? Well the effect is extraordinary. Verse 28.

[16:19] Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. And your young men shall see visions. Now I want you to listen to that. For a moment. I want you to listen to Numbers 12 verse 6 to understand that. In Numbers 12 verse 6 it says this, hear my words.

If there is a prophet among you. So how do you know there's a prophet among you? I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him as in a dream. So how are you a prophet in the Old Testament? God spoke to you in a vision. And God speaks to you in a dream.

Now do you see what God is saying? What is God saying in Job? He's saying when the spirit comes, I'm going to pour my spirit out and everyone, all my people, are going to have the same knowledge of God that the prophets of old did. You are all going to have a relationship with me on the same level as my prophets did. There's going to be no one who's got the hotline. There's going to be no one who's kind of a cut above the rest. There's going to be no one who knows me just a little bit more specially, a little bit more closely. All of my people are going to know me intimately and they are going to make me known. In fact, amongst my people when my spirit comes, they will all be prophets. There are only going to be prophets amongst my people in the future.

In the same way that we are all kings and we are all priests. My people will know me intimately and they will make me known. Why does God need this massive increase in the amount of prophets amongst these people? Few in the Old Testament, everyone in the New. Why? Well, let's make clear in verses 30 and 31. And I will show wonders in the heavens on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. It's the same awesome day of the Lord that we talked about last week that nobody can endure. The day of the Lord when God will judge the world.

The day when Jesus returns. In fact, there's hope for that day, isn't there? Verse 32. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. And the message has got to get out. The message has got to be proclaimed. The terrible day of judgment is coming. The day of the Lord is coming. So call on him. And that is why God needs so many prophets. And that is the heart of Peter's sermon in Acts chapter 2.

[18:55] Now I want you to please spot the difference. Spot the difference. Because I think it will help you to see how it applies to us now. Can you have a look at Acts chapter 2 in verse 17. It's there. The afterwards that Joel speaks of. Do you see that? Verse 28. And it shall come to pass afterwards. Peter changes. Peter changes in Acts 2.17. And in the last days it shall be. And the last days is the period between Jesus going back to heaven, ascended where he is now, and his return to judge. It is that whole period from the ascension of Jesus to when he comes again. And Peter is saying that that promise of the Spirit being poured out as it's just been poured out at Pentecost, the tongues of fire, the rushing wind, the speaking in all the different languages, to speak the knowledge of God across the world, the day of the Lord has come. That is what Peter is saying. So look at the end of Acts chapter 2 and verse 21. How do we know that the day of the Lord has come? How can I say that?

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now do you see what Peter has left out? He's left out at the end of chapter 2 and verse 32.

Peter has left that off. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. Instead, Peter goes on to tell them about the deliverance that has come about in Jerusalem.

I wish I'd printed it out, but he goes on in Acts 2 to tell them about what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. And that's what he does from Acts 2.22 onwards. He tells them how the day of the Lord has come. He tells them how judgment has come. But judgment in Acts 2, Peter tells us, has not fallen on people, it has fallen on one person. God hasn't judged the world yet.

He has judged his one and only Son. For the sky darkens. And he took the punishment that his people deserved. So that all who call on his name will be forgiven.

[21:13] You see, Joel chapter 2 and verse 31, can you just see that? The sun shall be turned to darkness is fulfilled twice. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood. There is the fulfillment, isn't there, of Jesus' first coming. He dies outside Jerusalem. And what is there for three hours? What is there for three hours? Darkness, isn't it? And it is fulfilled on the second coming when Jesus will come to judge the world. You see, there are only two places where your sin will be

punished. And both are dreadful. And both are places of darkness.

At the cross, when it goes dark, Jesus dies in our place. And the pit of hell, that is the place of awful darkness where people face the judgment of God. And that is why so many prophets are needed. And that is why the Spirit is poured out. So this message can be taken to anyone and everyone and everyone. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name will be saved. And that is what the book of Acts is all about. About the calling on Jesus' name that goes out in three stages. From Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth.

So that those who God calls can call on him. Because you can't call on Jesus if you've never heard of him. And this means that everyone sitting in this room this morning is in one of two groups. Some of you who may not have yet called on Jesus. Let me ask you again, think back. Do you want to go to the promised land of no fear and no shame? The land of perfect satisfaction? Not because of what you're getting what you want, but because your life is totally focused on God. On the God you were created to relate to. Do you want to go there? Well, what you've got to do is you've got to call on Jesus to save you. You've got to look to the first day of darkness and see your sin nailed to the cross in the body of God's Son. Because if you will not do that, the Bible warns you and I that we will experience the full horror of the second day of darkness when Jesus returns. And if you will not let Jesus take your sin at Calvary, you will bear it for eternity in hell. And that is why you need so many prophets.

Because the message is, call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. Come to him. Acknowledge that you need forgiveness and accept it that it's through the cross and pledge your loyalty to him. The cost of Jesus. I find this so often when you talk to people about it. They think the cost of Jesus, coming to Jesus seems so high. And yet the cost of not calling on the name of the Lord is far, far higher. Come to him before it's too late. And if you've come to know Jesus so wonderfully, so many of us have. If we've come to know God, we only know him by his spirit. You only trust in the cross of Christ because God has poured his spirit into your heart. We only have understanding of this wonderful gospel of grace because of the gift of the Holy Spirit that God has given to us. But I think what has really struck me as I've studied this over the last couple of days, is we are not given this gift of the spirit to remain silent. You've got the same spirit that was poured into the apostle. Just think of Peter, isn't it? Peter, the little servant girl comes up to him as he's warming his hands by the fire and she says, you know him, but he's not a friend of Jesus. And this little girl, he says, no, no, I never knew.

[ 24 : 53 ] He denies him three times. And then he turned to Acts 2 and he's a liar. The bravery. The same Holy Spirit that is in you changed the apostle Paul from a persecutor of the church to the greatest preacher the church ever had. The same spirit is in you. And the reason that God has multiplied his prophets by millions in these last days is because the message must go to millions.

Who will tell people that they need to call on the name of the Lord? Who will tell them if it's not you? Who will tell your colleagues in your office to call on the name of the Lord if it's not you and me? Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name given under heaven by which we may be saved.

And the only way to God's promised land is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. And the only way to call on the name of the Lord Jesus is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

Is to call on the send and spread. Let's pray.