

Session 10 God's Zeal to Release Blessing (Joel 2:18-27)

18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people. ***19*** The LORD will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. ***20*** But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things.” ***21*** Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things! ***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. ***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. ***24*** The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. ***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. ***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. ***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.” (Joel 2:18-27)

I. THE GREAT TRANSITION IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. A transition in the book of Joel occurs with one small word in Joel 2:18—*then*. Joel says, “Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and pity His people.” In other words, when the people gather in solemn assemblies to cry out to God, *then* the Lord will be zealous for the land, and will have compassion on His people. Joel had just spoken of the “perhaps” of God, saying that God may relent and leave a blessing behind if His people were to cry out to Him.
- B. God’s zeal is aroused in response to prayer. The first half of the book of Joel is about crisis and the need for wholeheartedness in seeking to receive God’s mercy. The second half of Joel begins with this word *then*, and gives details about God’s blessing for those who cry out to Him.
- C. The primary themes in the second half of the book are about Israel’s salvation and triumph over their enemies. God vindicates those who come before Him with a whole heart in fasting and prayer. In doing this, He vindicates the truthfulness of His name and covenant-keeping nature.
- D. Joel describes God’s salvation and deliverance for Israel. The promises here are also for God’s people around the world, as we apply the principle of “like kind, but lesser degree.” He has given Israel as a witness of the power that He will express all over the earth (Isa. 43:10). What is written of Israel’s salvation in the Scriptures is for our example (1 Cor. 10:11). The wisdom, power, and kindness shown to Israel are a picture of how He will bless His people in all nations.
- E. What happens to Israel in the end times and in the millennial kingdom, both in blessing and judgment, will also happen to the nations “in like kind, but lesser degree.” The nations will experience a lesser degree of both revival and judgment, yet it will still be in a substantial measure.

II. GOD'S ZEAL FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL: MANIFESTING HIS SOVEREIGNTY

¹⁸*Then the LORD will be zealous for His land and pity [have compassion on] His people. (Joel 2:18)*

- A. God describes Himself as zealous for His land.
- B. Jesus chose the place of His birth, life, and death. He chose where He would make His grand entrance as King at His return, and the place from which He would govern the millennial earth.
- C. God's zeal for the land of Israel is a new idea to many Gentile believers.

¹⁴*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal." (Zech. 1:14)*

²*"I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her." (Zech. 8:2)*

- D. The land of Israel is important to God. He has deep emotion for this little piece of land. The whole earth is the Lord's, yet Israel is His particular geographic inheritance. He chose Jerusalem as the place He would rule the millennial earth (Zech. 14:4, 16; Ps. 48). It is the city of the great King. He chose it from the beginning and has established world history around it.

³⁵*"Jerusalem...is the city of the great King." (Mt. 5:35)*

¹³*For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place. (Ps. 132:13)*

- E. Israel is the "center" of the earth where three continents join. Europe, Asia, and Africa meet at this strategic place. Civilization itself was born and came forth from this region.

⁵*Thus says the Lord GOD: "This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst [center; NIV, NASB] of the nations and the countries all around her." (Ezek. 5:5)*

- F. Satan also wants to rule Israel. Satan knows that Jesus has "backed Himself into a corner," so to speak, by promising not to return to earth until the leadership of Israel proclaims to Him, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt. 23:39). Throughout history, Satan has sought to destroy the Jewish people. Before Christ came, Satan tried to destroy the nation to prevent the birth of the Messiah (Rev. 12:1-5). Now he seeks to prevent the return of Christ by eliminating the people who must receive Him back.
- G. God's zeal for the land of Israel is rooted in zeal for His own glory, as He displays His sovereignty in the process of winning the Jewish people and ruling the earth from Jerusalem. God's glory will be displayed in the fact that He chose a city before history began and then showed His sovereign power and patient love in bringing His purposes to pass in that city.
- H. Anyone who treats the land of Israel with injustice, whether Jew or Gentile, is in trouble with God. A dramatic reversal through supernatural intervention is coming to the nation of Israel; she will experience a supernatural blessing and triumph over all her enemies! God will take this weak nation and make it the leader of all the nations, displaying His own power in the process.

III. GOD'S COMPASSION MANIFESTED IN HEALING THE LAND

¹⁹*The LORD will answer and say to His people, "...I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations."* (Joel 2:19)

- A. God has great compassion for His people. One of the ways that He will manifest that compassion is through healing the land. God will heal the physical land of Israel by supernaturally blessing the agriculture.
- B. From God's point of view, Israel stretches from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15). The majority of this land that God promised Abraham is a barren desert, yet it will be healed by God. He will cause the agriculture to grow in a supernatural way. During the Millennium, God will provide rain on Israel. The Lord set up the rain cycles in Israel to cause them to be dependent on God for it. They have rain according to their relationship to God.
- C. Throughout her history, Israel has known many droughts and much barrenness of the land. God has promised a great turnaround. He is zealous to transform their land, giving them abundant rain and food provision. Isaiah spoke of this dramatic healing of the land. The desert will experience an agricultural miracle so that it flourishes and grows like the garden of Eden (Isa. 51:3).
¹*The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad...the desert shall...blossom as the rose; ²it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice...The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it.* (Isa. 35:1-2)
³*For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD...* (Isa. 51:3)
- D. The fullness of this agricultural blessing will occur after Jesus returns. The fruit of His righteous government will be manifest in the agriculture, the atmosphere, and the livestock.
- E. The blessing described here comes to fullness after the Lord's return. However, the principles of God's kingdom never change. Therefore, whatever the Lord will do in the age of full blessing, He will do in part now. The promise of God healing the land is an important truth. The days are coming when blessed agriculture will be an issue of life and death in the Great Tribulation. We must know what is in God's heart related to agriculture and prayer and obedience.

IV. POLITICAL AND MILITARY BLESSING

¹⁹*"I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land...His stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things."* (Joel 2:19, 20)

- A. God promises to give Israel political and military victory over all her enemies. All the nations will recognize Jesus as King and will see Jerusalem as the capital city of the millennial kingdom.
¹⁷*At that time [in the millennial kingdom] Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem.* (Jer. 3:17)

- B. God will do the impossible by taking Israel, the weakest, most reproached nation in history, and causing them to rule all nations with humility in the Millennium.
- C. All nations will stand against Israel (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Zeph. 3:8; Ezek. 38:4). Satan will gather a great army to destroy Israel (Rev. 16:13-14; 19:19). There will be no chance of her deliverance and salvation from a natural point of view. Then, suddenly, Jesus will demonstrate His power and deliver Israel.
- D. The powerful kings of the earth will attack Israel. God set up the end-time drama by putting the oil in the Middle East, to test all nations.
- E. Joel highlighted an important detail of the end-time drama in his prophecy that God would remove the northern army from Israel by driving them into a barren and desolate land.
- ²⁰“I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea [Dead Sea] and his back toward the western sea [Mediterranean Sea]; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things.” (Joel 2:20)***
- F. Joel prophesied that the Babylonian army would come from the north in his own day; now he is speaking of the Antichrist's army that will come against Israel from the north at the end of the age. The defeat of this northern army is a prominent theme of end-time prophecy (Ezek. 38-39).
- G. The Antichrist's army will be made up of a coalition of nations.
- H. Israel will not have an army at this time, as a result of the Antichrist establishing a peace treaty with Israel and other Middle Eastern nations (Dan. 9:27; Ezek. 38:10-16). When her defenses are laid down, then her towns will be attacked and plundered by the Antichrist's coalition of nations. Israel will have no help from other nations. The largest army in history, with the best weapons, the most money, and the strongest coalition of nations, will come against weak Israel. Jesus will drive the northern army into the barren and desolate desert regions surrounding Israel. Israel's greatest military victory in history will occur when Jesus returns.
- I. The Antichrist will do monstrous things to Israel. Jesus will defeat him and his army so completely that the stench of his dead army will arise (Joel 2:20). This will happen literally. Ezekiel prophesied that it would take Israel seven months to bury the multitudes of the slain soldiers from all the nations who come against them (Ezek. 39:12; Isa. 34:2-3). The stench and foul odor will arise from the rotting bodies of the slain army and will pollute the land.

¹²For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them... (Ezek. 39:12)

²For the indignation of the LORD is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. ³Also their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses... (Isa. 34:2-3)

V. BE GLAD AND REJOICE!

²¹***Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvelous things! (Joel 2:21)***

- A. Jesus will begin a process of political and agricultural blessing when He returns. He will progressively develop Israel over the next 1,000 years (Rev. 20). Under Jesus' leadership, the agriculture, the atmosphere, and the animals will be blessed in an unprecedented way.
- B. After describing Israel's triumph over the northern army, Joel cried out, "Fear not and be glad and rejoice!" Joel exhorted Israel to rejoice in the Lord and to not fear, even before the victory was manifest—even while the hostile nations still surrounded them. The Lord's message is that He is in control. He will bring a sudden reversal, and therefore, they should rejoice. God called Israel, as a barren woman, to sing for joy ahead of time, before she bears her children (Isa. 54:1).
- C. Even though this message was spoken directly to Israel, all of God's people in all the nations must also receive this exhortation. Every believer in every nation, on every continent, must receive this message. Those who see the Antichrist going forth causing terror must rejoice in the Lord and trust in His provision and direction. Jesus is totally in control.

- D. The Lord even speaks to the beasts of the field about the renewal He will bring at His coming.

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. (Joel 2:22)***

- E. There will be severe famines during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:5-8). There will be droughts, earthquakes, and other disturbances in weather patterns, along with military conflicts. All of these will contribute to famine. Yet, the Lord calls His people and even the animals to fear not.
- F. The Scripture emphasizes two different emotions in the end times: fear and gladness. Jesus said that many would faint from fear (Lk. 21:26). God's people will sing and rejoice (Isa. 24:14-16).

²⁶***"...men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken." (Lk. 21:26)***

¹⁴***They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; for the majesty of the LORD...*** ¹⁶***From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: "Glory to the righteous!" (Isa. 24:14-16)***

- G. The Body of Christ will sing even before the victory is manifest with a spirit of faith.

- H. God's people are to be glad and rejoice in the Lord because He will faithfully give them rain.

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. (Joel 2:23)***

- I. The former rains are the autumn rains that come in October and November. They are the heaviest rains. They prepare the ground for plowing and sowing. After these former rains, it rains more lightly and more periodically from December to April. Then the latter rains come, or the spring rains, just before the harvest. These rains bring the crop to maturity.
- J. The Lord requires that Israel ask for rain in this age and in the age to come (Zech. 10:1).
¹Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone. (Zech. 10:1)
- K. The Lord promises to restore to Israel the years that the swarming locust has eaten and to cause people to eat in plenty and be satisfied (Joel 2:25-26).
²⁵"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. ²⁶You 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. ²⁷Then 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." (Joel 2:25-27)
- L. He will give Israel double for all that was lost in her sin (Isa. 40:2). The fullness of the promise will occur in the millennial kingdom. This reveals God's nature to answer His people with extravagance as they call on His name in humility and repentance!
²"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins." (Isa. 40:2)
- M. In the Millennium, God will do wondrous things for His people (Joel 2:26). This is in contrast to the Antichrist who will do monstrous things against them (Joel 2:20). The wondrous and marvelous work of God will far surpass the monstrous work of the evil one.
- N. God's marvelous actions will cause the nations to know that He is the Lord (Joel 2:27). His goal is about relationship. He wants His people to know and recognize that He is in their midst.
- O. Joel prophesied, "My people shall never be put to shame!" This "never" has not yet happened in history; Israel has nearly always been put to shame, if not in one season, then in the next. Yet there is coming a day when Israel will never again be put to shame. The weakest of all the nations will be ruler over all the earth, that God might forever display His sovereignty!