

Joel: The Last Days

Bro. Kory Cunningham



My wife and I got up Friday morning and it was a pretty normal morning for my family. We were getting ready, getting the kids ready, and making their lunches, and then all of a sudden, everything changed. Because the sun hadn't fully come up yet, it was still dark outside. We had the lights on inside the house, and then everything just went black. Of course we immediately realized that the power had gone out. Have you noticed when the power goes out that everything we normally do changes? "Dad, the light isn't on in the bathroom." "Son, the power is out." "Dad, turn the show back on." "Son, the power is out." "Dad, warm the milk up in the microwave." "Son, we can't, the power is out." Everything was different because the power was out. We live in an age of power. We live in an age where we expect the lights to come on. We live and move in accordance to the age we live in, where there is power all the time, and when that power goes out, we almost don't know what to do.

As we exit into Joel, we will see that Joel will prophesy of an age to come where there will be a great power. God's Spirit is actually going to dwell in people; God is going to pour His Spirit out upon believers. In Acts chapter 2, we see that prophesy came to fruition as Peter declared that time had come and the Spirit had been poured out. So we, as the church today, live in that age of great power where we have God's Spirit living inside of us.

We are living in a privileged age, an age of God's power where we can live out the gospel through the glory of God. I wonder how many of us forget that, and we live as though the power has gone out. We live as though we don't have God's Spirit inside of us. We still live in our flesh, we still live enslaved to sin instead of in the power of the Spirit for the glory of Christ.

As we look at the prophecy of Joel, I pray that we will be reminded of this age we live in; this age of great power where we have the Spirit of God living inside us. I pray that we stop living as though the power is out and we start living as though we are connected to God with His spirit living inside of us, and that we truly are living in those latter days.

What does the book of Joel have to do with the big story of the Bible? That's what we've been doing in every book. We haven't been asking what each book is about, but what that book has to do with the big story of the Bible. It will not be hard to answer because Peter is going to answer it for us in Acts chapter 2. Not only will our Scripture reading be from Joel, we will also read how Peter quotes Joel in Acts chapter 2. So we will have two texts in this lesson.

But first, I want to talk a little bit about Joel. There is not a lot known about Joel. He isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible except for the book of Joel. We know he is a prophet. Most scholars consider that he is prophesying after the exile. No one really knows the date of Joel because there is not much information on him. There are no kings mentioned, so it's really hard to date the book of Joel. But the name, Joel, means 'Yahweh is God.' It is a pretty cool name. The pattern, or outline, of the book starts out with judgment in the first few chapters. Locusts will come and they will destroy everything. Then an army will come and destroy everything. There will be great suffering among God's people, and we see that it is from God because of the judgment on the people. Then we see there will be a repentance that will hopefully take place among God's people.

Scripture

""Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments."" (Joel 2:12)

Rend means to tear your heart, or to cut your heart. He wants the people not just to tear their garments, but also to tear their hearts and to mourn and to weep over their sin. I love this picture of repentance. This is a great picture of what repentance looks like. When repentance happens, we see God will do restoration. God is going to restore all the damage the locusts did. He is going to restore all the damage the armies did, and He will restore His people. It ends with this picture of final judgment, where there will be this valley of decision where He brings all the nations and all of His people, and a great judgment will take place.

So the outline I gave of the book of Joel is very simplistic. But I want to see what the book of Joel has to do with the story of the Bible and what it has to do with Christ and His kingdom. So we are going to read our next text on how Peter will use the book of Joel in the book of God.

Scripture

"But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and

signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”(Acts 2:14-21)

The Spirit Comes With Power

Let's quickly look at what happens in the book of Acts before we get to this prophecy. As Jesus is ascending to Heaven, He tells the disciples to wait because the power of the Holy Spirit is going to come upon them. They are waiting in the upper room for this power. So all of a sudden, we hear this mighty wind, this rushing, this commotion, come upon the disciples. We see tongues as flaming fire rest upon them, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. They begin to speak in tongues. The word for "tongues" is ***glóssa*** in the Greek, and it just means languages. They are not speaking gibberish; they are speaking known languages. All these people are from different countries with all these different languages. They say hey, these people are from Galilee, yet they are speaking Egyptian, because I can hear it in Egyptian. And then someone else says the disciples are speaking in their language. They are not speaking in their normal Galilean accent. They are speaking in different languages so all these different people from different nations can hear what is being done through the power of the Holy Spirit. The people gather and some began to mock the disciples. They say they are just drunk, don't pay any attention to them.

I don't know about you, but that seems like a very weird thing to say. I don't know many drunk people who stand up and start speaking fluently in other languages they haven't learned. That is not typical drunkenness. You don't stand up and start speaking Spanish when you don't know Spanish. Usually, you start saying things that makes no sense!

The Last Days

God has given them the gift of languages so the people can all hear. Some are saying they are just drunk. I'm sure one guy said look, I don't speak Italian when I'm drunk, so these people probably aren't drunk. So the other group says ok, then what does this mean? That is the question I want to answer, because Peter tells us exactly what it means. What does it mean that these people are speaking in languages that we can all hear, though they didn't know this? What does this mean that they have the Spirit? What does all this wind have to do with all that is going on here? The first thing that Peter tells us is that we are in the last days. What does this mean? This means that we are in the last days. Peter says, "*But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...'*" So what has just happened? The Spirit of God has been poured out upon the disciples, the believers in Christ; the Spirit has been poured out. We see this throughout the book of Acts. Those who believe receive the Holy Spirit. So what does 'the Spirit has been poured out' mean? Peter will say it means the prophecy of Joel has begun. The prophecy of Joel is fulfilled, which is that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out. Peter wants to tell the Church that it's been a long time coming, but we are now in the last days. When Jesus came in His incarnation and now in His death, burial, and resurrection and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, we are in the last days. The kingdom of God is here. It is already, but it is not yet; there is still more to come. But right now, we are in these last days.

It was interesting in thinking of the last days, going to commentaries, scholars, and especially people who disagree on end times issues. They would have trouble with this verse, and say no, Peter meant this is similar to what Joel said; it is like what Joel prophesied. If you look at this verse, it is not at all what Joel said. Peter says, "But this is what was uttered to the prophet Joel." Peter he is saying this event is what is actually happening in

the prophecy of Joel. It is not like it, it is not similar to it; it is what Joel spoke of, so we are in these last days.

What does that do for us, what does that mean for us? I think it means as believers we live in a sense of urgency because we are in the last days. This is a time where there should be less thinking about when the end is coming, and start thinking about what we are doing in light of the fact that the end is here. The last days have begun. Instead of trying to chart it out or reading a bunch of books about it, and figure out exactly when this whole thing is going to end, we should see that it has already begun. We are in the end, and we need to live in urgency for the sake of the gospel and for the glory of Christ.

It is kind of like when I used to race motocross. You pace yourself depending on how many laps you had. Some races would be five laps, so the first lap you went hard, then you paced yourself the second lap, third lap, and the fourth lap. But there was one lap where when you crossed the finish line, you would get a white flag. The white flag meant this is the last lap. There is only one more to go, and at the end of this lap is the end; it's the checkered flag. No matter how much I had preserved my energy, no matter how much I had set the pace, whenever I saw the white flag, everything was on the line. It was this sense of urgency that there was nothing left after this last lap. I was going to give it absolutely everything I had, because it was the last lap, the very end, and the checkered flag was coming.

I think Peter would say that is how we should be living right now. When the Spirit was poured out, the white flag had been waved. We are in those last days. Christ is going to come back, so we should be living in this sense of urgency because the checkered flag is coming. We have this opportunity get right now, to live with urgency, and preach the gospel to all nations.

God the Holy Spirit Poured Out

Not only does the Spirit being poured out mean we are in the last days, but secondly, it means is that we have received the Holy Spirit of God. If you have been around Christianity for a while, you understand the doctrine of the Trinity. But if you are new, you might not understand it, although no one really fully understands because He is God and He is above us. We see from the scriptures that God is one; there is only one God. He is one in essence and nature, but he is also three in personhood. He revealed Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As we have been walking down Route 66, we have heard a lot about God the Father and God the Son, but we haven't heard a whole lot about God the Holy Spirit. In Joel, the spotlight is put on God the Holy Spirit and He is poured out upon us.

- **Old Testament**

What does this mean for us that God the Holy Spirit was poured out? Let us think about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, certain believers are filled with the Holy Spirit for certain tasks. If you were the king or the prophet, you would be anointed with the Holy Spirit to speak. But it didn't mean that the Holy Spirit was with you always. It could be for a certain task for a certain period of time. It was only for a few privileged people.

- **New Testament**

What we see in the New Testament is completely different. The Holy Spirit is given to all believers for every single task. There is a huge transition that takes place at the moment of Pentecost. Now every believer who calls upon the name of the Lord is sealed with God's Holy Spirit, and you have the Holy Spirit for every single task of life that you are going to face. If you are a believer, you are a Spirit filled believer. You have the Holy Spirit living inside of you.

I always get a little cracked up when someone comes into my office because they have something going on, and they say, "Bro. Kory, would you please pray for me?" I say, "Of course, I love to pray for people." Then sometimes they say, "I know you have a direct line to God, so could you just pray for me because you have His number and He will listen to you." My reply is, "Yes I have a direct line to God. But do you know what? So do you, and I don't have any more of a direct line than you do. I have God's Holy Spirit living inside of me, but so do you." You have the Holy Spirit of God living inside of you if you are a believer. This is radically different than in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we live in a privileged age.

❖ **True Repentance**

Peter preaches that as the Spirit is poured out, there will be true repentance, there will be a cutting of the heart as Joel spoke about. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will receive the Holy Spirit. He is teaching us that salvation is not only about getting our sins forgiven and going to Heaven, but it is about receiving the Holy Spirit. You are connected to God through His Holy Spirit, something has happened, you have been changed by the glory of God! You have the Holy Spirit.

What does the Holy Spirit do for us?

I want to show you three things from Scripture that the Spirit of God does for us.

1. The Holy Spirit gives us God's presence.

Having the Holy Spirit means, we have God's very presence living inside of us. Romans chapter 5 says, "...because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." I love that verse! God's love has been poured into our hearts and the Holy Spirit of God has been given to us. God has given Himself to us through the Holy Spirit. The context here is that we can have hope in suffering because the Holy Spirit is living inside of us. God's love has been poured out into us. 1st Corinthians says, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that

God's Spirit dwells in you?" Just think about that for a moment. God's Spirit dwells in you.

From Genesis to Joel, we have seen God's presence. It was first in a garden, then we sinned and God's presence left man. The next time we see His presence was in a tent, a tabernacle, which His people carried around from place to place. Then the transition from the tabernacle happens and God's presence is put in the temple where it is in a permanent location with His people in the Holy of Holies. God's people didn't have to ask where God was. He was in the temple, His presence was there, and they could go into His presence. If you were the High Priest, you could walk into the Holy of Holies.

But now we see in Acts this radical transformation that happens. God's presence is no longer in one temple in one city. God has now made you His temple. He dwells in you. You don't have to go to a certain location into a certain building, because God has made His dwelling in you. You have become God's temple, His spirit dwells in you, and therefore, you have God's presence. God is with you. I don't know how much better it can get than that.

2. The Holy Spirit gives us God's promise.

I love what Ephesians 1 says about the Holy Spirit, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." When you believed in the gospel, you were given the promised Holy Spirit. In being given the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is your guarantee that you will receive your full and final salvation and reign with Christ forever. It is your down payment. God has given you a down payment to say, I am giving you My Spirit just to let you know that I am going to see to it that you make it to the end. If you don't, and for some reason we get separated, if for some reason I stop loving you, if for some reason you wind up in Hell, you get to keep My Holy

Spirit and My Holy Spirit will suffer along with you. Now is that ever going to happen? No way! There is no way God is going to let that happen to the Holy Spirit, but He has given you that to say that if you have become a true believer and have the evidence of the Holy Spirit living inside of you, you know that He who began a good work in you is going to bring it to completion. He will complete His work in you because He has given you the guarantee of the Holy Spirit living inside of you.

3. The Holy Spirit gives us God's power.

❖ To Witness

We actually have God's power living inside of us. The first thing the power does is give us the power to witness. Acts 1:18 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Jesus says you will receive power when you receive that Holy Spirit, and that power will enable you to be His witness. So if you are a believer and have called upon the name of Christ, and you have received the Holy Spirit, you have power to be a witness for Jesus Christ. You have the power to share the gospel with those you love. You have the power to share the gospel with neighbors, and co-workers, and with those whom you come into contact. You have God's power living inside you that leaves you to be a witness for the Kingdom of Christ.

❖ To Live

You have been given power to be a witness, but you have also been given power for living. It is not just to witness about Christ, but also to actually experience the life changing grace that Christ gives you. You have the power to live a victorious life because you have the Holy Spirit living inside you. 2nd Peter says, "His [Holy Spirit] divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness... (Notice those two categories. It is not just all about spiritual stuff, it is all the stuff. It is everything that has to do with life and everything that has to do with godliness.)...through the knowledge of Him who has called us to His own glory and excellence, by

which He has granted us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” God wants to tell you that because you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, you have the power, for godly things and spiritual things, but also for everyday life stuff, for everything pertaining to life. Some of you are thinking, *I am having marriage issues and I really don't know how to resolve those. I am just an angry person. I am just depressed right now. Things are just going bad right now. I don't know how to get over this certain sin. I don't know what to do.* God says that you have the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of you, and He has given you the power to overcome all things that pertain to life and godliness.

So we have no excuse to be enslaved in sin. We have no excuse to be that old person we claim to be. God is in you, and God is changing you. You have the resources of God Himself living inside of you. Therefore, you have hope. No matter what you are going through, you have God's Spirit dwelling inside you and He says I will be with you always!

He has given you the power to witness and also the power to live. What do we do with that? Galatians says, “But I say walk in the Spirit and you would not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Because you have the power of the Spirit, you need to walk in that power. Walk in God's Spirit so that you will overcome the desires of your flesh. Even though you have the Spirit living inside of you, the temptation is always to continue to walk in the flesh, and not really walk in that Spirit, to not walk in that power, to not use that power. Paul is saying in Galatians that you need to walk in that power. You need to walk in the Spirit and you will have power for all things in life and godliness. You will not gratify the flesh, but instead, you will live out the glory of God and the power of the Spirit. So walk in the Spirit.

Joel spoke of a time where the Spirit would be poured out, and Peter says we are in that time. Because the Spirit has been poured out, it should affect the way we live. We are not living as Old Testament believers. We

are living as New Testament Spirit-filled believers who have power to witness, and power to live in God's presence. We have this power and this promise; therefore, it should change the way you live.

Salvation Through Jesus

The third thing Peter would tell us about this day of power that has come is that salvation is through Jesus the Lord. In Joel, the prophecy says that in that day whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. In Acts, Peter quotes it, *"And it shall come to pass that anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* If you ask the people in Joel's day who the Lord was, the name they would give is YAHWEH. The name of the Lord is God. Peter tells us that has been clarified a little bit, and the name of the Lord is none other than Jesus Christ. He says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth..." And then, he reminds them what has happened about Jesus. He has performed wonders, you crucified Him, you killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead. He then makes this statement, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." This is how salvation happens; you call upon the name of the Lord, you call upon the name of God. Peter clearly identifies here who God is, who YAHWEH is, and what this name is that we are to claim. That name is Jesus Christ whom God has made both Lord and Christ.

From the prophecy of Joel, we find that salvation is only through the name of Jesus Christ. Joel is teaching us that we are in those last days. When it comes to the Kingdom of God in these last days, our response should be living in a time of urgency, not complacency. The reason is because God's Holy Spirit has been given to us without measure. Therefore, we should be living in His presence and His power because of this great promise He has given to us. Because of this, we understand that we have the name, the name of Jesus Christ, the only name by which a dying and lost world can be saved. As Spirit-filled believers, we should proclaim that name until the

one day when He comes back and ushers in that Kingdom that is going to last forever.

What did Joel have to do with the big story of the Bible? He is telling us the last days are coming, and Peter is telling us the last days are here. Therefore church, let's wake up; the white flag is being waved. It is time to be serious about the gospel. It is time to be serious about the Kingdom. The last days are here; let us therefore live as though we are in the last days.