

January 29, 2023

“God Promises His Presence”
Lesson 5

Joel 2:21-27

Intro

The last lesson in the Unit of God's Promises comes from the book of Joel. His message from God is directed to Judah and Jerusalem. The first half of the book (only 3 chapters long) deals with a plague of locusts which devour the land, leaving it barren. The people suffer from famine. Joel interprets this plague as the consequences of the nation's sins, and calls on the people to repent and return to the Lord.

Just before the passage we'll examine today, God says that he was “jealous for his land” and showed “pity” on the people (2:18). He promises to give the people renewed sustenance (2:19) and to protect the people from foreign armies (2:20). His renewal would cause his people and their land to prosper.

Read Joel 2:21-27

1. vs. 21: The verse begins with “do not be afraid”

This phrase is used some 50 times in the Old Testament

Usually it is directed toward the people being addressed

Here, it is directed toward the land itself

The land has been distressed by several disasters (see Joel chap. 1)

God promises here to undo the results of those disasters, to renew the land

There is no need to fear

Instead, the land is to “rejoice and be glad”

God Himself “has done great things”

God's greatness will be on display again as He restores the land

2. vs. 22: The message of “do not be afraid” extends from the land to the wild animals

The devoured land from chapter 1 has negatively impacted the habitat of these animals

There has been fire, drought, and swarms of insects

The land was uninhabitable for both human and animal life

God promises to restore the pastures and the trees and the vines

All these places offer both food and habitat to the wild animals

God cares for and is connected to all of His creation

Trees and vines that produce fruit show a thriving environment

This will be beneficial to all life living there

3. vs. 23: Zion here refers to Jerusalem, just as it does in I Kings 8:1 and Joel 2:1

God says He will give them both autumn rains and spring rains, as before

This indicates a return to the pattern of rainy and non-rainy seasons

These rains would obviously cause the plant growth noted in vs. 21-22

The word “faithful” has also been translated as “righteousness” and “justice”

God showed both qualities in disciplining the people's unfaithfulness with drought

He also shows these qualities in bringing the people back to the land
His justice has been fulfilled, and now he will extend mercy to His people
God showed He is faithful to His people, that He would treat them rightly
The people are told to “rejoice in the Lord your God” because of these actions
It’s easy to see them rejoicing as the rains come, producing crops once again

4. vs. 24: The land under drought produced nothing; they people had nothing from it
Here God indicates a complete reversal of what they have known in that time
“Threshing floors filled...vats will overflow”
There is not just enough, but an abundance of these things
Grains like wheat and seeds like corn were primary food items
The edible parts were separated from the chaff on the threshing floor
The floors now will be filled with grain, contrasting with the emptiness before
A vat usually refers to a large container for liquid
The Hebrew word for vat here is also used for wine presses
These presses were also used to obtain olive oil
Both wine and olive oil were used as offerings to God
An abundance of them indicated God’s blessing on the people
If the presses “overflow”, that shows how bountiful the harvest has been
As with the grain, there is an abundance where there had been a lack
5. vs. 25: God says here that He will “repay you for the years the locusts have eaten”
The word used here indicated restitution, the paying back for wrong done in Ex. 22
God has not done wrong here
The people experienced the consequences of their sins
But God is “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Joel 2:13)
He acknowledges the suffering of his people in Joel 2:18
When the people repent of sin and selfishness, they receive comfort and restoration
6. vs. 26: The verse begins with God promising that the people will have plenty to eat
This is a continuation of the blessings promised beginning in vs. 21
The people are told to “praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders”
This seems like it would be natural
No doubt the people will feel grateful for this positive change of status
But this is also a reminder that God is gracious, and always has been
God freed the people from slavery in Egypt
God fed them during the exodus despite their complaining
God demonstrates His covenant love to His people always, despite their failings
- The second part of the verse has God saying, “never again will my people be shamed”
The people have been shamed because their disobedience led to a drought
They were shamed at not being able to take care of even their basic needs
But shame also has a spiritual connection for idolaters and those who oppose God
Many Psalms talk about deliverance from shame as a blessing from God
The people of Judah could be encouraged by this truth from the Psalms
Despite their shameful behavior / circumstances, God has not left them

7. vs. 27: God ends this line of thought with a “then” statement

After all these good things have happened to and for the people, then what?

“Then you will know that I am in Israel”

These things are proofs that God is present and active in their midst

When God’s promises are answered before them, He is present with them

This is a unique relationship

“No other god” has a right to Israel’s allegiance or worship

No other “god” could do what God has done for these people

The people can live without fear of being shamed because God is with them

Application: This text reminds us that even during a time of suffering, it is important to maintain hope.

The people Joel writes to have experienced drought, hardships, and shame. Yet God through Joel promises hope and a change for the better.

Sin has negative consequences for our spiritual lives, yet even then God does not ignore or disregard His people. God, in His time, brings joy to replace the sorrow from those sufferings. He will always be present for His people.

God is concerned and cares for all His creation. This passage shows God restoring the land and the wild animals as well as the people. All of His creation belongs to God

Prayer: Father God, thank You for brings hope and restoration to both us and the world we live in.

Despite our sins, You continue to seek us and to be present with us. Thank You. Renew us again so we might better follow and praise You. Show us daily how to live our lives as Your people, free from shame. In Jesus’ name, Amen.