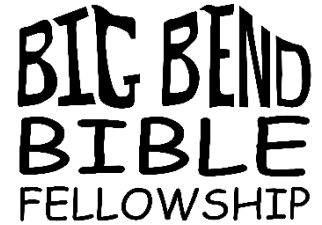


Former & Latter Rain



Joel 2:2:18-32

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12/20/2020

The Land Refreshed, 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.*

v18-19 – How will God respond to the sincere, collective repentance of Israel?

He will take pity on them and deliver them blessing them with grain, new wine, and oil.

What does it mean God will remove Israel's reproach among the nations?

There will be a time when Israel is respected by the nations as one of them, a sovereign nation. There has been a foreshadowing of this in the Church Age but there remains an undercurrent of antisemitism especially among their neighbors that denies full acceptance. This promise will not be fully realized until the Millennial Kingdom.

v20 – Joel was written between 835-800 BC, from what Northern army will God deliver Israel?

- Assyria – This was partially fulfilled when Assyria came down from the north and took the northern kingdom of Israel in 732 BC – but God miraculously delivered the southern kingdom Judah from captivity.
- Babylon – Of course Babylon invaded Judah later in 605 BC when their turning back to God faded. But this captivity was limited to 70 years.
- Persia, Greece & Rome – These armies also came from the North and increasingly oppressed Israel... Persia was a friend of Israel (enemy of my enemy) Greece started out as a friend of Israel under Alexander but later turned, Rome was increasingly oppressive culminating in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple and causing the Jews to disperse.
- Ottoman Empire – pretty much insured that Israel would remain dispersed among the nations.
- Remnants of the Ottoman Empire after Israel re-established – Fulfillment is foreshadowed in God helping Israel be preserved and grow despite threat
- Gog & Magog/King of the North or Antichrist – There is a future fulfillment of the removal of a northern army; God supernaturally destroys the invading armies on the northern mountains of Israel.

v21-24 – How will God bless Israel after He destroys the Northern Army oppressing them?

God will cause the agriculture to return to Israel in abundance with the former and latter rains being restored.

What is the significance of the former and latter rains?

- Physically, it is the pattern of rainfall that enabled Israel to be prosperous agriculturally.
- Spiritually, it is God pouring out His Spirit in conjunction with His coming... the former rain with His first advent, the latter rain with His return.

What is the significance of the latter rain being in the first month?

That is the beginning of the year on the Hebrew calendar when they celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets.

- God instituted seven feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23... three spring feasts, three fall feasts with one in-between (Pentecost). The three Spring feasts were prophetically fulfilled by Jesus paying the penalty of our sins on the cross. And of course, Pentecost was prophetically fulfilled when the Holy Spirit first indwelt the church. The fall feasts are associated with the return of Christ to rescue His elect and establish the Millennial Kingdom.

So, does that mean that the rapture of the church will happen on Rosh Hashanah?

No, this would negate the doctrine of imminence associated with the rapture... no one knows the day or hour (Matthew 24:36). The rapture of the church will not be tied to any of the Feasts of the Lord because the church today is overwhelmingly made up of Gentiles. The Feasts were for Israel and the church began in Jerusalem and was initially made up of Jews.

- Rosh Hashanah may be when Jesus returns to earth to wrap up the Tribulation and rule during the Millennial Kingdom (that will certainly be a significant event that merits prophetic fulfillment of a Feast day).

v25 – How is the plagues of locusts and Northern army connected?

God will deliver Israel from both... He will restore what was lost from the locusts and the invading Northern army during the Day of the Lord.

v26-27 – How will Israel respond to their deliverance from the Northern army?

- They will experience the blessing of God and properly praise Him for the blessings.
- Israel will never be separated from God's blessings again (thus this has to be taking about the Millennial Kingdom).

God's Spirit Poured Out, Joel 2:28-32

²⁸ *"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, your young men shall see visions.*

²⁹ *And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

³⁰ *"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.*

³¹ *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*

³² *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.*

Why did Peter quote this passage at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21)?

It was the explanation of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers and enabling them to speak in languages they did not know.

- God was pouring out the early rain of His Spirit on Israel to establish the church and inspire the New Testament.
- While this happened to only a remnant of Israel, it foreshadowed when all Israel would be saved

v28-29 – How will God bless Israel in the future?

By pouring out His Spirit on all of Israel. This will happen when all Israel is saved at the end of the Tribulation and beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

Romans 11:25-26 – *Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so, all Israel will be saved*

How will God pouring out His Spirit manifest itself?

your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions

People will have direct revelations from God from inspiration, dreams and visions...

What is the difference between dreams and visions?

Dreams are while sleeping and visions are while awake.

What biblical examples of dreams and visions come to mind?

Daniel: visions of angels explaining the end times; Jacob: dream of a ladder to heaven; Peter: dream of eating unclean food; Paul: vision on Damascus road, being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2).

Is this pouring out of the Spirit happening today?

- Not all flesh... the Jews are mostly unbelievers. But there is a remnant who believe.
- There are legitimate cases of dreams and visions especially among Islamic peoples because missionaries are outlawed.
- And inspiration (prophesying) happens regularly among all believers:

John 14:26 – *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*

- Miracles happen as a result of prayer but not the sort of miracles that authenticate those speaking God's Word. Scripture is not being revealed today, the canon of Scripture is closed...

1 Cor 13:8-10 – *whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

When will there be sign gifts associated with God pouring out His Spirit as the latter rain?

During the Tribulation... it is likely the 144,000 will manifest them because they are sealed though they do become Tribulation martyrs: Compare this passage speaking of Tribulation martyrs in general ...

Revelation 7:15 – *Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*

With this about the 144,000...

Revelation 14:4 – *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.*

And all Israel who will be saved (Romans 11:26) ... though only one third of those entering the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom...

Zechariah 13:8-9 – *And it shall come to pass in all the land, Says the Lord, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'*

Will these Holy Spirit sign gifts only be seen in Jews?

No, while these were seen primarily among the Jewish believers during the times of the Apostles, they were also seen among the Gentiles...

Acts 10:44-45 – *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

Will the latter rain pouring out of the Spirit happen only during the Tribulation or could it happen before?

God is sovereign and so it could happen prior to the Tribulation but this is probably only during the Tribulation since it is associated with God using Israel.

- Former rain: Apostles who first experienced the pouring out of the Spirit were all Jews.
- Latter rain: Occurs during the 70th Week of Daniel when God is working through Israel again... the Church Age is completed and the church is no longer on earth.

v30-31 – What is the fulfillment of the wonders in heaven with the sun and moon being darkened?

Events during the Tribulation... Jesus said there would be great, supernatural and deceptive signs and wonders in Matthew 24:24 along with:

Matthew 24:29-30 – *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

This is reinforced in John's revelation...

Revelation 6:12-13 – *I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.*

There is also the fifth bowl judgment...

Revelation 16:10 – *Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness*

Is this darkness natural or supernatural?

- The fifth bowl judgment is certainly supernatural since it selectively targets the Antichrist's regime.
- The earlier instances are probably natural... dust in the atmosphere from pillars of fire. The fact that they were prophesied make them supernatural.

Why does God generally use natural means to fulfill prophecy?

God more often than not uses natural means to give unbelievers reason to continue in their unbelief. This is the same as why He spoke in parables:

Matthew 13:15 – *For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.*

How can we reconcile God keeping unbelievers in unbelief with His desire that all be saved?

2 Peter 3:9 – *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) which is all from God, born from above (John 3:3). People can not be saved strictly from human reasoning; it is not genuine. Simply professing to be a Christian does not make it so, you must trust in the provision of God for salvation...

Romans 10:9 – *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

v31 – When will these wonders be seen in heaven and on the earth?

Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord – these things will happen during the Tribulation which culminates in the return of the Lord. It will indeed be a great and awesome day.

v32 – Who will be saved?

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord. This has been the case since Pentecost and will continue through the Millennial Kingdom until the Eternal State.

What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?

It means to ask God for deliverance in prayer. That you are speaking to God in prayer implies having a personal relationship with Him.

- Calling on the name of the Lord is not so much the action of prayer but having faith in the One who is being called upon.

Why does it say, call on the name of the Lord and not just call on the Lord?

This reinforces the idea of a personal relationship... when you know the name of a person, it is personal. It is not just knowing about the other, you know them personally.

- The name Jesus means Savior... you know Jesus as Savior, not just a historical person who led a religious movement.

How is it that deliverance is in Mount Zion?

This is a reference to Jerusalem where Christ died on the cross. Our Deliverer was a Jew who paid the penalty for our sin and inspired Jewish apostles to write the New Testament that helps us know Him better.

Who does the Lord call?

The remnant... there has always been a remnant of Jewish believers that he uses even during this time of spiritual darkness for Israel.