

The story behind Joel

- Judgement
- Turning to the Lord
- Blessing

- A foretaste of judgement and salvation at the end of the world

Judgement and salvation predicted together

- Prophecy sees a wide sweep

- Fulfilment comes in stages

- Another example from Isaiah – the birth of Jesus

We must continue to remember the story behind the book of Joel. A plague of locusts came and for several years damaged the land. The wine-trade was ruined. The crops were damaged. The people were hungry. The temple sacrifices were not provided for. Joel calls upon the people to turn to the Lord. This is what they did. God blessed them. The people had experienced God's judgement and they had experienced His blessing after judgement.

Joel says this is a foretaste of the end of the world. Every calamity is a foretaste of the end of the world. The Day of the Lord is near upon all of the nations ^{□1}. The Day of the Lord is the time when God steps into history and saves His people and judges His enemies. There can be a foretaste of it and the locust plague was a preview of what it would be like in His judgement.

In Joel 2:28–32 we have a prediction of the Day of the Lord. Judgement and salvation are mixed up together. Afterwards – after the locust plague – the Spirit will be poured out. It goes on to say God will show wonders in the heavens, and so on.

Salvation and judgement are prophesied together. Part of it was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Peter referred to Joel on the Day of Pentecost ^{□1}. Yet Joel goes on to speak of wonders in the heavens. This kind of language in 2:30–32 refers to God's judgements. **It is an important principle to see that salvation and judgement are predicted in the same prophecy.** Prophecy is like this. It sees a wide sweep of everything God will do. Joel is given a vision of everything God will do to put things right, and bring salvation and judgement to the world. Judgement and salvation are seen at the same time. As the prophecies are fulfilled they come to pass a bit at a time. They gradually unfold. The prophets saw a sweeping vision, but it unfolds stage by stage. It is important to understand prophecy in this way. The total vision in Joel 2:28–32 includes two aspects to what God would do. In fulfilment, the first thing was the outpouring of the Spirit but there are other aspects to be fulfilled. This is the principle in Acts 1:7 *'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons . . . But you shall receive power...'*. They were asking a question about prophecy. Jesus says: It is not for you to know times and seasons.

As another example, think of Isaiah chapter 11. It has a prediction which includes the birth of Jesus. It also deals with the final glory of the world. It begins with the coming of a Saviour but it ends with saying *'The earth shall be filled with the glory of God...'*. The vision covers everything God would do. As history went forward first Jesus came, then salvation was achieved, then the Spirit was given. But the day when the earth will be filled with the glory of God has not yet come. The prophecies are often given all in one vision, but they are fulfilled in stages.

^{□1} Obadiah
15

^{□1} Acts
2:17–21

- **After chastening would come even greater blessing**

- **A widening of the people of God**

In Joel 2:28–29, Joel promised that after the end of the chastening there would come even greater blessing. The locusts were removed but God promises more, including a new level of experiencing the Spirit. Old Testament believers knew something of the Spirit, but the prediction was that one day the Spirit would come in a greater way. This would lead to a new ability to speak for the Lord – prophesying. It would lead to a knowledge of God’s will. Visions and dreams were ways of getting to know God’s will in Old Testament times. God promised a widening of the people of God, so as to include slaves ... men ... women... sons... daughters, every kind of person. In Old Testament times God’s people were simply within one nation; few Gentiles were saved. But the coming of the Spirit leads to a widening of the people of God.

Great Upheavals in the history of the world

- **Language taken from Old Testament stories**

*“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. (2:30)
The sun will be to darkness,
and the moon into blood,
before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD.” (2:31)*

- **The Exodus plagues of Egypt**

This kind of language refers to violent and dramatic events in the history of the world. It is language taken from Old Testament stories. Think of the plagues of Egypt, in passages such as Exodus 9:22. There was thunder, lightning, rain, hail. Tremendous events took place in the earth and in the sky. Joel predicts similar events in the surrounding nations. This language is an Old Testament way of speaking of great upheavals in the history of the world.

- **The giving of the law at Sinai**

Similar language is found elsewhere. On Mount Sinai, the law came with thunder, lightning, and a trumpet blast. Sinai was covered with thick cloud, and then with smoke. The smoke billowed up. The whole mountain trembled. Joel 2:30– 32 reminds us of the exodus and the giving of the law. When Jesus died there was an earthquake and the tombs were opened. The sun was darkened for three hours. The language here is similar.

- **When Jesus died**

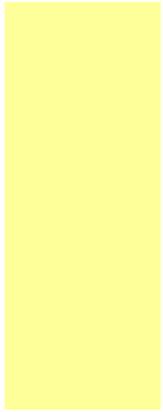
A promise of salvation

*“And it shall be that all who call on the name of the LORD will be saved.
For on mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance,
as the LORD has said,
among the saved ones whom the LORD calls.” (2:32)*

In the middle of these judgements there is a promise of salvation¹. In the midst of all that may happen, God offers a way of deliverance. Five things are specially to be noted.

• **God's way of deliverance**

1. Salvation comes by calling on the Saviour.
2. Salvation is calling on the name of the 'Yahweh' (or Jehovah, often translated **LORD**). This is the name which means 'the God who saves by the blood of the lamb'. It is the name God got for Himself at the time of the first Passover events.
3. Salvation is for everyone.
4. Salvation takes place in Jerusalem – the place where Jesus died.
5. Salvation comes as God calls us. We call upon Jesus, because God calls us to do so.



	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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