

Joel Lesson 26

I have posted six collections of articles about the Holy Spirit at StudyJoel.com. Each collection includes articles by a different preacher, and all of the articles came from the *Firm Foundation* between 1890 and 1973. The six preachers are Alexander Campbell, J.W. Jackson, Guy N. Woods, Luther G. Roberts, J.W. Roberts, and Roy Lanier, Sr.

Why did I post these articles? The short answer is that I found them helpful, and so I figured others might also find them helpful. I read many more articles than these, but these are the articles I pulled out of the stack after reading them.

And this collection is **not** one-sided. Instead, you will find opposing views and discussions in these articles, something which I also found very helpful. The last thing anyone needs when studying the Holy Spirit is an echo chamber.

So that is the reason why I posted these articles to the website - but I should mention something else that is most certainly **not** a reason why I posted these articles on the website. I did not post them so that we could engage in a battle of the famous preachers: "Yes, brother this or that may have agreed with you, but brother so and so agrees with me! So there!"

Yes, we have some difficult issues ahead, but we will find our answers only in the word of God, which is our only standard.

If we ever proceed instead by headcount, or by which preacher is the most famous, or by which preaching school agrees with us, then we will very quickly go astray.

We will not be quoting any preachers as any source of authority. Instead, we will be using the Bible as our only source of authority.

Also, you may want to find or download some of our earlier handouts for these upcoming lessons on the final verses of Joel 2. I have found those handouts helpful in preparing these lessons, and I suspect you may find them helpful as well.

- **Lesson 12 Handout:** 30 Questions About Joel 2
- **Lesson 14 Handout:** All Direct References to the Holy Spirit
- **Lesson 16 Handout:** Concordance of Key Words About the Holy Spirit
- **Lesson 17 Handout:** Statistics of the Holy Spirit
- **Lesson 24 Handout:** Parallel "Pour" Prophecies

- **Lesson 25 Handout:** More Statistics About the Holy Spirit

If you are missing any of these handouts and if you don't have access to the Internet, let me know so that I can print you a copy.

Joel 2:32, Continued

Joel 2:32 – And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

When we ended last week, we were looking at the second half of verse 32 from the perspective of our hypothetical Old Testament scholar living between the Testaments.

The second half of verse 32 explains the first half – the second half explains why it is that “everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” And the explanation is:

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who **escape**, as the LORD has said, and among the **survivors** shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Two words immediately stand out in that phrase: “escape” and “survivors.”

The Hebrew word translated “escape” in verse 32 (Strong’s #6413) is used earlier in Joel 2:3 and is also found in the book of Ezra (as shown on the Handout for Lesson 26):

Ezra 9:8 – But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a **remnant** (#6413) and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery.

Ezra 9:14–15 – Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no *remnant* (#7611), nor any to **escape** (#6413)? O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a *remnant* (#7604) that has **escaped** (#6413), as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.”

Those verses from Ezra link the same Hebrew word translated here as “escape” with the faithful remnant that had returned to Jerusalem under King Cyrus. Isaiah also uses that same Hebrew word to describe a faithful remnant.

Isaiah 4:2 – In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the **survivors** (#6413) of Israel.

Isaiah 10:20 – In that day the *remnant* (#7605) of Israel and the **survivors** (#6413) of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

Isaiah 37:31-32 – And the **surviving** (#6413) *remnant* (#7604) of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a *remnant* (#7611), and out of Mount Zion a band of **survivors** (#6413). The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

And, finally, we find that same Hebrew word in Obadiah. In fact, when we turn to Obadiah we find a verse that is remarkably similar to Joel 2:32.

Obadiah 17 – But in Mount Zion there shall be those who **escape** (#6413), and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.

Joel 2:32 – ... For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who **escape** (#6413), **as the LORD has said**, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

And note that Joel writes, “as the Lord has said.” Is Joel quoting the book of Obadiah in that verse? Let’s come back to that question in a moment.

For now, let’s look at the other key word we find in verse 32 – the word “survivors.” As with the Hebrew word translated “escape,” the Hebrew word trans-

lated “survivors” (Strong’s #8300) is also found elsewhere in the Bible:

Isaiah 1:9 – If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few **survivors** (#8300), we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

Obadiah 14 – Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his **survivors** (#8300) in the day of distress.

Obadiah 18 – The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no **survivor** (#8300) for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

We can make two immediate and very instructive observations about these verses.

- First, Isaiah 1:9 is quoted by Paul in Romans 9:29 to describe the faithful *Jewish* remnant in the church. (“And as Isaiah predicted, ‘If the Lord of hosts had not left us **offspring**, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.’ ”)
- And, second, we have now found **both** of the key Hebrew words from Joel 2:32 in the short book of Obadiah.

Let's focus for now on the first of those two observations. We have now seen that both of these words ("escape" and "survivors") are used in the Bible to describe the faithful remnant.

The Handout for Lesson 26 shows most of the verses that we just looked at, along with a few other verses. Each of those verses uses either a Hebrew or a Greek word related to a remnant – often the faithful remnant.

As listed at the bottom of the Handout, there are six Hebrew words and four Greek words that are used to describe a remnant in the Bible. Having looked at the definitions, the words seem to me to be close to synonyms, and it is not clear why so many different words are used.

If you also want to look at the original Hebrew and Greek words along with their definitions, I have provided their Strong's numbers on the Handout.

For those not familiar with Strong's numbers, they were created by James Strong in 1890 for use in his famous exhaustive concordance of the King James version of the Bible.

He assigned a number to each Greek and Hebrew root word, and those numbers, called Strong's numbers, are still very widely used today. There are 8674 Hebrew root words and 5624 Greek root words in his

list. If you want to look one up, the easiest and cheapest way to do that is with Google (e.g., Hebrew Strong # 6413).

Here are a few more things we can learn from the Handout:

- The Hebrew word translated “remnant” in Habakkuk 2:8 is interesting because it is also found in Joel – in fact it is found three times in one verse of Joel! (Joel 1:4 – What the cutting locust **left**, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust **left**, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust **left**, the destroying locust has eaten.) Perhaps God wanted us to start thinking very early in the book of Joel about the faithful remnant that would be left, just like what was left by those locusts!
- Acts 15:16–18 is a quote from Amos 9:11–12.
- Romans 9:27 is a quote from Isaiah 10:22–23.

God’s people have been a faithful remnant for **almost** all of their history. Why do I saw “almost”? Because the faithful people of God have been in the majority only twice in the history of the world – immediately after creation and immediately after the flood. Other than those two times, we have always been in a distinct minority – what the Bible

calls a remnant. And, of course, that is another reason why we should never proceed by headcount!

So how would our Old Testament scholar have viewed verse 32?

“For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.”

I think he would have viewed that description the same way those same words are used elsewhere in the Bible – as a description of the faithful remnant.

And I think the text of verse 32 supports that conclusion. The ending of verse 32 is an explanation of the beginning of verse 32. And what was the beginning of verse 32? “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Those who escape and survive in the second half of the verse are those who are saved in the first half of the verse.

We are looking here at those who are saved. We are looking here at those who call on God. We are looking here at those called by God. We are looking here at the faithful remnant – those who escape; those who survive. We see all of those things in this one verse.

And, yes, today we cannot read those descriptions without thinking of the church – but let's hold off on that until we get to Acts 2.

Let's look now at that question about Obadiah that we mentioned earlier.

Verse 32 includes the phrase “as the Lord has said.” When and where did God say this earlier? Is Joel quoting Obadiah?

If the phrase “as the Lord has said” means “as the Lord has said in the Bible,” then I think Obadiah must be the source of the quote. And perhaps we can say that view is strengthened by something we noted earlier – that **both** of the key Hebrews words we looked at in verse 32 are found in the short book of Obadiah.

But why does it matter – after all, God said it either way. And, yes, that is true – but if Joel is quoting Obadiah here, then we have an important piece of evidence as to the date of Joel – if Joel is quoting Obadiah, then Joel must have been written after Obadiah was written.

So when was Obadiah written?

The most common answer to that question is that Obadiah was written after the exile to condemn Edom for their pride and for their treachery against

their brother, Judah, after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem.

And, yes, the message of Obadiah certainly fits with how Edom behaved after Babylon destroyed Jerusalem – but it also fits pretty well with a much earlier event in Judah's history.

In the mid-ninth century BC, Edom revolted against Judah, and the Philistines and Arabians (likely aided or at least encouraged by the revolting Edomites) invaded Judah.

2 Kings 8:20–22 – In his days Edom revolted from the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own. Then Joram passed over to Zair with all his chariots and rose by night, and he and his chariot commanders struck the Edomites who had surrounded him, but his army fled home. So Edom revolted from the rule of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

2 Chronicles 21:16–17 – And the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabians who are near the Ethiopians. And they came up against Judah and invaded it and carried away all the possessions they found that belonged to the king's house, and also his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest son.

If Joel is quoting Obadiah here in verse 32, then I think that fact would help us date Obadiah rather

than help us date Joel. I think that fact would tell us that Obadiah must have been written in response to the **earlier** event involving Edom rather than the event that occurred much later during the exile.

But, Joel may instead be quoting something God said earlier through another prophet that is not recorded elsewhere in the Bible. And if that is true, then the quotation in verse 32 provides no evidence as to the date of Joel.

My opinion? I think Joel is quoting Obadiah, and I think Obadiah should be dated in the ninth century rather than the sixth century – but that’s just my opinion.

So we have made it all the way to the end of Joel 2.

What should we do next? Should we just move on to Joel 3?

No, we can’t start Joel 3 quite yet. We aren’t finished with Joel 2. There is something else we must consider, and I think we all know what that something else is! We have to study Acts 2 to understand Joel 2.

But why? Why should we consider something written hundreds of years after Joel was written? Shouldn’t we instead focus entirely on what Joel

meant to its original audience? That original audience didn't have Acts 2, so why should we consider Acts 2?

The answer, of course, is that if we want to understand everything that we can understand on any topic, then we must consider everything that the Bible has to say about that topic.

And the prophecies in the Bible provide an excellent example of why that principle is so important. When we read the prophecy we, like those who first heard it, may have questions about when and how that prophecy would be fulfilled. But those questions are very often answered in the New Testament when the inspired text quotes the Old Testament prophecy and tells us when and how it has been fulfilled.

And that is precisely what happens with this prophecy from Joel 2. Many of the questions we had about it after considering only the Old Testament are answered when we open the New Testament. So, let's turn now to the book of Acts.

Acts and Joel

Acts 2 is a very eventful chapter in the Bible, but so is Acts 1. Let's quickly review what happened

in those two chapters before we consider how Joel 2 fits in.

What happened in Acts 1?

- Jesus appears to the apostles for 40 days, speaking to them about the kingdom of God.
- Jesus orders them to remain in Jerusalem and to wait for the promise of the Father, saying that “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
- The apostles ask Jesus if he will “at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (I know that we sometimes criticize that question, but there is nothing wrong at all about that question, as Jesus’ answer indicates and as Peter explains in Acts 2:30. Also, keep in mind two more things about that question: (1) the apostles had just studied the kingdom with Jesus for 40 days before asking it, and (2) “restoration” is one of the key themes in Joel.)
- Jesus tells them in response that the Father will determine the timing, but that “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 ascends back to heaven. (We studied that wonderful event when we looked at Daniel 7:13–14. That was when Jesus “was given dominion and glory and a kingdom.”)
- Two men in white robes appear and say, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”
- The apostles return to Jerusalem and stay in an upper room, devoting themselves to prayer with Mary and with Jesus’ brothers. All in all, there about 120 people there.
- They choose two candidates to replace Judas, and, after casting lots, the lot falls on Matthias, who is then “numbered with the eleven apostles.”

As I said, Acts 1 is an action-packed chapter! But so is Acts 2. What happens in Acts 2?

- The apostles are still all together in one place when the day of Pentecost arrives.
- And then something amazing happens: “Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues

as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

- Devout Jews and proselytes from every nation under heaven hear the sound and come together. And they are bewildered “because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.”
- They are amazed, astonished, and perplexed. Some ask, “What does this mean?,” while others mockingly say, “They are filled with new wine.”
- But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifts up his voice, addressing “men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem.”
- Peter assures them that they are not drunk, but rather Peter says that what is happening is what was uttered through the prophet Joel. And Peter then recites Joel 2:28 through the first half of Joel 2:32.
- After the Scripture reading, Peter’s sermon begins in verse 22 and continues uninterrupted through verse 36.
- In verse 37, we are told that those listening to Peter “were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

- Peter answers their question in verses 38–39: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”
- And Peter says many more words, bearing witness, exhorting them, and saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”
- And those who received Peter’s word are baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- And those who were added to their number “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
- And many wonders and signs were being done “through the apostles.”
- And all who believed were together and had all things in common sharing with each other as any had need.
- And day by day, they attended the temple together and the broke bread in their homes, receiving their food with glad and generous

hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

- And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

What a beginning! And why do I call it a beginning? Because that is precisely what Peter calls it later in Acts 11:15 – “the beginning.” Acts 1–2 tell us about the beginning of the Lord’s church.

Now, our task in this class is not to study Acts 2 with the same detail that we are studying Joel. I wish we could do that now, and perhaps we can do that someday, but our task now is much simpler: we need to figure out the relation between Acts 2 and those verses from Joel 2 that Peter quoted at the beginning of his sermon. And in doing that we need to consider the questions about Joel 2 that were listed on the Handout for Lesson 12.

Let’s start by looking at the verses from Joel 2 as they are quoted by Peter in Acts 2.

Acts 2:16

Acts 2:16 – But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

My High School English teacher did not allow us to ever use the word “this” in a sentence without

answering the question “this what?” Peter’s Greek teacher, it seems, did not have such a rule!

And so we now have the question “this what?” This miracle? This event? This day? This period of history?

I think the context offers some help. Peter’s statement was prompted by the mocking accusation that the apostles were drunk on their new wine.

That accusation, by the way, establishes the fact that the apostles were already known to abstain from alcohol. How? Because new wine is just grape juice and because the accusation is described as mockery. The accusation was that the apostles had someone managed to make themselves drunk on their grape juice! That is why the accusation was mockery! If the Apostles drank alcohol, then the statement would not have been mockery but rather would have just been an alleged fact.

But back to our topic – that mockery is the context of Peter’s opening statement, and Peter’s point in that statement is to explain that what the people are seeing and hearing – the apostles all speaking in different languages – is not evidence of drunkenness, but rather is evidence of the fulfillment of Joel 2.

That purpose suggests to me that the “this” in verse 16 refers to, or at least includes, the miracle in Acts 2:6 and likely also includes the sound like a mighty rushing wind that we are told caused the people to all come together to hear the apostles.

But, I say that the word “this” may “at least” include that miracle and that sound. Why? Because the quotation from Joel includes multiple events. And so, as we proceed, we may find that Peter’s quotation from Joel includes additional events in Acts 2.

Now, one of our questions about Joel 2 is why Peter chose to quote Joel 2 as he did. And, of course, in asking that question we are really asking why the Holy Spirit made that choice.

As for why Peter quoted a prophecy about God pouring out the Holy Spirit on all flesh, I think the answer is clear. Peter opens with that quote because, as he told us, this is that. That prophecy was being fulfilled.

But why the prophecy from Joel 2? Why not one of the parallel prophecies that we saw on the Handout for Lesson 24? Why not Isaiah 32? Why not Isaiah 44? Why not Ezekiel 39? Why not Zechariah 12?

And, of course, we don't know the answer to that question. But it may be worthwhile to note that, of all the prophecies shown on that Handout, the prophecy from Joel 2 is the only one that includes the great promise that "everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

It is with that great statement that Peter ends his quotation from Joel 2, and it is with that same great topic of salvation that Peter ends his entire sermon.

Acts 2:17-18

Acts 2:17-18 – 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.

The book of Joel was written in **Hebrew**, but later translated into **Greek** in the Septuagint. The book of Acts was written in **Greek**, but the recorded statements in Acts may have been originally spoken in **Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic**. And our copies of Joel and Acts are in **English**.

What does all of that tell us? One thing it tells us is that we should not be surprised to find some wording differences between the text of Joel and the text of Acts when it quotes the text of Joel.

And we such a difference here: where Joel says “afterward,” Peter says “in the last days.” What should we make of that difference?

Possibly nothing. Peter may have simply used a different phrase that means the same thing as “afterward” – both may just mean “later.”

But it is also possible that Peter used that narrower phrase by inspiration to focus the prophecy on some specific period of time – not just a starting point of time, but a period of time. In other words, not just “later,” but in some period of time called “the last days.”

And, of course, we know that period of time includes the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 because Peter tells us that the prophecy was being fulfilled at least on that day.

What else might that period of time include? When might it end?

The two most common answers are that either “the last days” ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or will end with the second appearance of Christ at the end of the world, in which case

the “last days” might be called “the gospel age” or “the church age.”

Which is it? Let’s hold off on that question for now. Perhaps we will find some more evidence in our study of these verses.