

Joel 2:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Analysis

God promises restoration: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." The Hebrew *veshillamti lakhem et-hashanim asher akhal ha'arbeh hayeleq veh echasil vehagazzam chayli hagadol asher shillachti bakhem* (וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אָכַל הָאַרְבֶּה הַלֵּק וְהַחֲסִיל וְהַגַּזְזָם חַיִּל הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר שִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם) offers comprehensive restoration after comprehensive judgment.

"I will restore" (*veshillamti*) uses *shalam* (שָׁלַם), meaning to make whole, complete, recompense, or restore. The verb suggests not merely returning what was lost but making complete compensation. God doesn't just stop judgment; He actively reverses its effects. "The years that the locust hath eaten" (*et-hashanim asher akhal ha'arbeh*) indicates prolonged devastation—multiple years of crop destruction causing famine and economic collapse. Yet God promises to restore even lost time.

The four locust terms (appearing also in 1:4) describe comprehensive devastation through successive waves of destruction. Calling them "my great army which I sent among you" (*chayli hagadol asher shillachti bakhem*) confirms that the plague was divine judgment, not random natural disaster. Yet the same sovereign God who sent judgment now promises restoration. This demonstrates the dual purpose of God's discipline: judgment intended to produce repentance (chapter 1-2:11), followed by promised restoration (2:12-32).

This restoration prophecy finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who restores what sin destroyed. Jesus declared: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The gospel doesn't merely forgive sin; it restores ruined lives, broken relationships, and wasted years. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 proclaims: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Historical Context

Joel's exact historical setting is debated, with proposed dates ranging from the 9th to the 5th century BC. The book contains no references to specific kings or datable political events. What is clear is that Joel addresses a community experiencing devastating locust plague, which he interprets as divine judgment and a harbinger of the coming Day of the LORD. The book moves from describing literal agricultural catastrophe to prophesying the eschatological Day of the LORD when God will judge nations and pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:16-21) applies Joel's Spirit-outpouring prophecy to the church age, showing the book's prophetic scope extends from Joel's time through Christ's first coming to His return.

Joel's prophecy of the Spirit's outpouring found initial fulfillment at Pentecost and continues in the church age, while his Day of the LORD visions await ultimate fulfillment at Christ's return. The book emphasizes genuine repentance ('rend your heart, not your garments'), God's character as gracious and merciful, and the call to corporate fasting and prayer in times of crisis.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Joel 2:25 deepen your understanding of God's character, particularly His holiness, justice, and mercy?
2. What specific attitudes, thought patterns, or behaviors does this verse call you to examine and change in light of the gospel?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and His redemptive work, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁלַּמְתִּי י	לָכֶם	אֶת	הַשָּׁנִים	אֲשֶׁר	אָכַל
And I will restore	H0	H853	to you the years	H834	hath eaten
H7999			H8141		H398
הַאֲרָבָה	הִיא	לִקְ	וְהַחֶסֶל	וְהַגִּדֹם	חֵילִי
that the locust	the cankerworm	and the caterpillar	and the palmerworm		army
H697	H3218	H2625	H1501		H2428
בְּכֶם:	שָׁלַחְתִּי	אֲשֶׁר	הַגָּדוֹל		
H0	which I sent	H834	my great		
	H7971		H1419		

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 10:6 (Parallel theme): And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.