

Joel 2:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Analysis

Joel prophesies the Spirit's outpouring: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." The Hebrew *vehayah acharei-ken eshpokh et-ruchi al-kol-basar venibbe'u beneikhem uvnoteikhem ziqneikhem chalomot yachalomun bachureichem chezyonot* *וְיִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵיכֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר וּבָנָיו בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנֹתָיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם פָּלֹמֹת* *u'yir* *וְיִרְאֶה* *אַתְּרוֹחַ עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר וּבָנָיו בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנֹתָיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם פָּלֹמֹת* is one of Scripture's most significant prophesies, quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

"Afterward" (*acharei-ken*, *אַחֲרֵיכֶן*) indicates eschatological fulfillment—after judgment and restoration comes the Spirit's outpouring. "I will pour out" (*eshpokh*) uses *shaphakh* (*שְׁפַחַ*), meaning to pour out abundantly, like water from a vessel. The Spirit isn't given sparingly but lavishly poured out. "My spirit" (*ruchi*, *רוּחַ*) is God's own Spirit—His divine presence and power dwelling in people.

"Upon all flesh" (*al-kol-basar*, *עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר*) is revolutionary. Previously, the Spirit came selectively on prophets, priests, and kings. Joel prophesies universal distribution—not limited by age ("old men... young men"), gender ("sons and daughters"), or social status (verse 29 adds "servants and handmaids"). This democratization of the Spirit fulfills Moses's wish: "would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

(Numbers 11:29).

Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:16-21) declares: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." The Spirit's outpouring on 120 disciples, enabling them to speak in tongues and prophesy, inaugurated Joel's prophecy. The church age is the "afterward"—the time between Christ's first and second comings when the Spirit indwells all believers (Romans 8:9), empowering witness (Acts 1:8) and transforming character (Galatians 5:22-23). Full consummation awaits Christ's return.

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

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Joel 2:28 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

הִכְיָה	אָסְרִי	כִּי	אָשָׁפֵךְ	אֶת
H1961	And it shall come to pass afterward	H3651	that I will pour out	H853
	H310		H8210	
רוּחִי	כָּלְלָעַל	בְּשָׁרֶבֶשֶׁת	יִנְבְּאֵת	בְּנֵיכֶם
my spirit	H5921	H3605	upon all flesh	shall prophesy
H7307		H1320	H5012	H1121
וּבְנוּתִיכֶם	סְלִמְמָוֹת	זִקְנִיכֶם	יִצְלָמְמוֹן	בְּכָחָרִיכֶם
and your daughters	your old men	shall dream	dreams	your young men
H1323	H2205	H2492	H2472	H970
רִאֹנוּ	חִזְוִין	וְתִּרְאֶה		
visions	shall see			
H2384	H7200			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 39:29 (Spirit): Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

Isaiah 32:15 (Spirit): Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Acts 2:39 (Parallel theme): For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Isaiah 44:3 (Spirit): For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Zechariah 12:10 (Spirit): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Proverbs 1:23 (Spirit): Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

John 7:39 (Spirit): (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Acts 2:33 (Spirit): Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Luke 3:6 (Parallel theme): And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Galatians 3:28 (Parallel theme): There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.