

TWO KINDS OF RAIN

BIBLE TEXT : Joel 1:1-20; 2:1-32;

LESSON 322 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things" (Joel 2:21).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Joel 1:1-20

¹ The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

² Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

³ Tell ye your children of it, and *let* your children *tell* their children, and their children another generation.

⁴ That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

⁵ Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

⁶ For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth *are* the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

⁷ He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast *it* away; the branches thereof are made white.

⁸ Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

⁹ The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.

¹⁰ The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

¹¹ Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

¹² The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

¹³ Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

¹⁴ Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

¹⁵ Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

¹⁶ Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, *yea*, joy and gladness from the house of our God?

¹⁷ The seed is rotten under their clods, the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Words of Comfort

"Fear not, O Land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things" (Joel 2:21). What words of comfort to disheartened Israel! Think how much it must have meant to a captive people who were suffering for their sins. They had just heard Joel's prophecy of the judgments that were to come upon them — words that filled them with black despair. Now, through the darkness, came this gleam of light: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice."

The judgment of which Joel spoke were not only for Israel. He spoke also of the "day of the LORD," which will take place during the Great Tribulation. It will be a "day of clouds and of thick darkness, . . . there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his words: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:10, 11).

If that were all the future one had to look forward to, would it not be frightening? God told Joel to write those words so that the Israelites would realise that they were sinners, and what their punishment would be if they did not repent and turn to God.

Hope

Never has God left man without a hope. He told the Israelites how to escape those judgments: "Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12, 13). In those words he was teaching people of all time that they would have to repent and be sorry for their sins in order to be saved.

God said, too: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). So no one needs to suffer the judgments of the tribulation. We can all be saved if we repent and turn from our sins and let Jesus be our Saviour.

Justification is only the beginning of the blessings we enjoy when we follow the Lord. Our next step is sanctification, in which the root of sin is removed. We receive that experience by praying and consecrating our lives deeper to the Lord.

The third step is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is what the Prophet Joel was talking about when he said: "Be glad then,

garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

¹⁸ How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

¹⁹ O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

²⁰ The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Joel 2:1-32

¹ Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;

² A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even* to the years of many generations.

³ A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land *is* as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

⁴ The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

⁵ Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

⁶ Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

⁷ They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

⁸ Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and *when* they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

⁹ They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

¹⁰ The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

¹¹ And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

¹² Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

¹³ And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

¹⁴ Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23).

The Dispensation of the Holy Ghost

All this was prophecy, pointing to the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the time when the Holy Ghost would be calling and preparing the Bride of Christ for the coming of Jesus. The Apostle Peter said that the prophets had foretold this glorious time of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and even the angels had been interested in it and had desired to know about it (**1 Peter 1:10-12** ¹⁰ **Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:** ¹¹ **Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.** ¹² **Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into).**

The first period in Biblical history was known as "antediluvian," the time before the flood. The patriarchal period continued from Noah to the settling of Canaan by the Israelites. Then came the period of the judges, and later the prophets. Then came the period to which Joel referred as the time of the "former rain." That began on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost descended and baptised the 120 in the upper room.

Jesus had said: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That was the reason for the baptism of the Holy Ghost: to give power to the children of God and to be witnesses so that many souls would be won for the Kingdom of God.

For some years following the Day of Pentecost, people received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. However, great persecution arose over the preaching of the Gospel, and finally most of the people who were proclaiming and living the Gospel had to go into hiding. The Church was almost smothered. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the Jews were scattered into all the world. This was part of the judgment that Joel had foretold. The Holy Land became desolate; no rain fell, and the trees were cut down. What had once been a beautiful land of gardens became a desert. But that was not the end of Israel's history.

The Later Rain

Joel had spoken of another time in the future, known as the time of the "latter rain." "He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the later rain in the first month." The dispensation of the Holy Ghost was not finished when the early disciples and Apostles died. The Apostle James, who lived in the time of the Early Rain, spoke of another time when he said: "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7).

The fruit of the earth of which he spoke is the Bride of Christ, who is being prepared for the coming of the Lord. The Church had received the Early Rain, beginning at Pentecost; but Jesus had not yet come to claim His Bride. There was another time coming when the baptism of the Holy Ghost would be poured out in greater abundance; and then, when the Bride was prepared,

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

¹⁷ Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God?

¹⁸ Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

¹⁹ Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

²⁰ But I will remove far off from you the northern *army*, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

²¹ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

²² Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

²³ Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

²⁴ And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

²⁷ And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

²⁸ 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:

²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

³⁰ And I will shew 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 great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Jesus would come. That brings us right to our day.

How do we know that Joel meant the baptism of the Holy Ghost when he spoke of the early and latter rain? Peter explained it on the Day of Pentecost when he said: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:16, 17), and he went on to tell about the work that the Christians who had received that power would do for the Lord.

Rain on Palestine

After Palestine had lain waste for many centuries, rain began to fall again, and the ground began to bring forth fruit. It was about the beginning of the 20th century when the desert began to blossom, and gradually more and more land has been put into cultivation until today some of the best crops in the world are grown in the Holy Land.

Joel had promised: "The floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 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. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:24-26).

For nineteen centuries the Jews have suffered throughout the world, but then God has sent them back to their homeland. They are returning in unbelief, but the time will come when they will receive Jesus as their Messiah. All the blessings which the prophets foretold of the Millennium will yet be showered upon those who believe and receive Jesus.

The Great Outpouring

Something else, greater than physical blessings, happened when the rain began to fall in Palestine. The great outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the time of the Latter Rain, came about just as God had said it would. It even came in the **first month** of the Jewish religious calendar, as was written by Joel. A few people through the centuries had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but the beginning of the great outpouring was reserved for April, 1906.

At that time there was a great spiritual hunger in the churches and among Christians throughout the world. There had been great revivals in Luther's time, in Wesley's time, and under the preaching of such godly men as Charles Finney, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, and D. L. Moody. Then came the great Welsh Revival in which the Holy Spirit brought thousands into the Kingdom of God.

In the city of Los Angeles, California, people in many churches were praying for a revival. A young businessmen's club would hold all-night prayer meetings. People would gather for cottage prayer meetings. All were longing for a greater outpouring of the Spirit of God than they had known. The account given by a man from the Welsh Revival deepened that hunger.

Among those who were hungering for the power of God upon their lives was the founder of the Apostolic Faith work of Portland, Oregon, Mrs. Florence L. Crawford. She had grown up in an infidel's home; but about 15 years before the outpouring of the Latter Rain, she had heard God speak to her in a ballroom, and say, "Daughter, give me thine heart." Through a neighbour woman whom she had noticed to be a devout Christian, she was

³² And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

helped to pray through and know that her sins were forgiven.

The result from the change in her life were to be felt around the world in time to come. Her activities were changed from those of seeking worldly pleasure to giving herself in service to others. She took food and clothing to the poor. She worked with others to build homes for unfortunate boys and girls. Her work in the prisons, trying to bring hope to the men behind the bars, was a labour of love for some mother's boy who needed help.

She heard about sanctification, but though her soul hungered for it, she could never find anyone who could tell her how she would know she was sanctified. One day a friend told her of some meetings that were being held in a part of town where they did not usually go. She believed, however, that those people had what she hungered for. In the first meeting she was in, the minister arose and said, "I believe someone here wants to be sanctified." That night she received that experience.

It was among those humble people, on Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles, that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost began. Great waves of power came down upon the people. And as the news spread of the falling of the Latter Rain in Los Angeles, reports came from India and from the Scandinavian countries that there, too, the power was falling. In many parts of the world this spiritual rain was noted. The time of the Latter Rain had come, and the hearts of those who were hungry for power from God were made glad.

James had said that the Husbandman (the Lord) had long patience for the fruit of the earth "until he receive the early and latter rain." Now the Latter Rain had come, which was to prepare the Bride of Christ for His coming.

Today the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), those who have believed the Word of God and have received the experiences God has for them, are expecting the coming of the Lord at any time. They are waiting to hear: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

QUESTIONS

1. Of what dreadful judgments did Joel tell the Israelites?
2. What hope did he give them?
3. Name the three definite Christian experiences.
4. What was meant by the spiritual "early rain"?
5. When did it come?
6. What were some of the judgments that came upon Israel not long after Christ went to Heaven?
7. What promises did God give to the land of Palestine for the future?
8. When did the Latter Rain begin falling? Where?
9. Are the Jews fulfilling prophecy today?
10. What is the "church of the firstborn" waiting for?