

## **Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 19**

### **Joel 2-3**

#### **1. Joel 2:17-18**

Last time there was a discussion of how to understand Joel 2:18 and following. If you remember from your reading of Bullock he makes the primary structural dividing point of the entire book between verse 17 and 18. The question in verse 18 is how to understand the statement, “then the Lord” either “was jealous” or “will be jealous for his land, and takes pity on his people.” Bullock understands it as “was jealous” and that was a response to a supposed repentance that had taken place after the call to repentance in the previous section. So in that space between 17 and 18 he would say repentance took place and now you have a record of the Lord’s response to that repentance.

If you recall the suggestion that I made last time at the end of our discussion, I think 18 is future and it’s not a response historically to a supposed repentance that already was held. This whole chapter I think is eschatological. You have the imagery of the locusts being used to depict the horses that will come against Israel eschatologically before the day of the Lord. If you take 18 as something that is past and already happened, what do you do with 26b and 27b where it says, “Never again will my people be shamed”? Certainly since the time of Joel the Jewish people have been shamed. It is hard to maintain that this is something that has already happened.

#### **2. Joel 2:23b Rain or Teacher of Righteousness**

Now I say that just as in the introduction where we pick up with verse 23b, which says, “Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sent you abundant showers both autumn and spring rains as before.” In the NIV that I’m reading from, where it says, “He has given you the autumn rains in righteousness” has a text note K which says, “or the teacher for righteousness.” So the question becomes, what’s

this verse talking about? What's the translation issue between the Lord giving either "autumn rains in righteousness," or a "teacher for righteousness"? There's a pretty significant difference of meaning.

Look at your handout where I've given the Hebrew there for "he has given to you," that's the phrase that is at issue. What does *moreh* mean? Under that there's NIVa and NIVb. NIVa says, "for he has given you a teacher for righteousness." NIVb says, "He has given you the autumn rains in righteousness." As far as NIVa and NIVb go that is part of the history of the translation process and publication of the NIV. When the NIV was initially translated it read as, "he has given you a teacher for righteousness." There were periodic revisions to the NIV text over a number of years.

I don't know if you've ever come across, sitting in a church somewhere with someone reading the NIV and the one you're looking at is different from what you're hearing. That created confusion because the translation committee would collect issues that were raised about particular translations and then modify the text with each additional printing of the NIV. So they had a number of different NIV printings out there that differed from each other. At a certain point in time they stopped that. More recently they collected a lot of the questions that were being raised about the translations and did a thorough revision of the NIV text, and that was published a year or so ago in the TNIV which is Today's New International Version. But in any case that's NIVa and b.

The King James has, "he has given you the former rain moderately." It takes "the rain" understanding. The New American Standard has "rain". The Keil and Delitzsch commentary has, "teacher for righteousness." The Septuagint has "two fold," and where that comes from I'm not quite sure. Perhaps there was a misreading for the term *moreh*? Let me just give you a couple more translations. The English Standard Version has "early rain for your vindication." The New Living Translation has "rain" as well. So the majority of recent translations are "rain" instead of "teacher for righteousness."

The crucial word in the phrase, *moreh*, is taken by some as “teacher” and by others as “former” or “early rain” is due to some contextual problems. This gets a bit complex but follow me with this. Most of the rabbis and early commentators will translate it as “teacher.” Others, including Calvin and many modern commentators take it as “early rain.” One of the meanings of *yoreh* that you find in this text, *moreh* means “teacher,” that’s in dispute. *Moreh* means teacher. *Yoreh* the following word there means “early rain.” That’s the rain that falls on Palestine from the last of October to the first of December at sowing time for the germination of seeds; but that’s open to interpretation. Then there’s *geshem*, which occurs in the second line of that Hebrew text. He has poured down for you, *geshem* “the rain,” and then in the last phrase of that Hebrew text you get *moreh* is “latter rain,” it seems in that last phrase that *moreh* is a mistaken use, probably due to dittography, a copy error because that last phrase reads, “the early and the latter rain” as before.

What is striking is that *moreh*, which occurs twice in this verse, is unquestionably used in the last clause of the verse, in the sense of “early rain.” You can hardly do anything else with it. In every other instance in the Old Testament, early rain is *yoreh* not *moreh*, except something in the English where there’s textual problems, but that’s a different issue.

Dittography: *Moreh* written instead of *yoreh*

So, what’s going on? It seems to me likely that the *moreh* in the last phrase of the verse is an example of the copyist error called dittography. The scribe wrote a *mem* instead of a *yodh*, because of the occurrence *moreh* earlier in the verse. It is very easy for your eye to confuse, you look at it and see the *moreh* and the *yoreh* are very similar. You put the *mem* down there instead of the *yodh* because *moreh* was earlier in the verse.

### Messianic Prophecy? Cf. Qumran

The following word after *moreh* in the first line of the text, *sadaqah*, means “in just measure at proper time,” if you’re going to translate that as rain rather than teacher. This is *sadaqah*; because it’s used in the ethical sense of righteousness not the physical sense. How can *sadaqah* refer to rain? It can, however, refer to a teacher. The understanding “teacher” is an old Jewish interpretation and it’s found in Vulgate and Rashi. It seems to me there’s a good case to be made for understanding this the way it was understood for centuries; and that is “teacher for righteousness.” If “teacher for righteousness” is accepted then what we have here is probably best taken as a messianic prophecy. If this chapter is all future and its talking about the end times, day of the Lord, there’s going to be that teacher of righteousness. Although some see it as a reference to Joel, that Joel is talking about himself is contested, and in context that’s not too likely he would use that definition to refer to himself. Keil sees it as all prophets idealized in Christ; or as in Qumran, some particular leader. You remember there was a teacher of righteousness in the Dead Sea Scroll community in Qumran. They called their leader the “teacher of righteousness.” Where did they get that? They got it out of this text, the only place in the Old Testament that you have that phrase.

### Payne Sees It as a Self-Reference to Joel Himself

Payne sees it as a reference to Joel. His view presupposes that Joel here is speaking of something that’s already come. The sons of Zion are to rejoice because God has given them Joel, the teacher who instructs them in righteousness with the result that God has now sent the rain. But, as I said, it doesn’t seem to me very likely that Joel would label himself a teacher of righteousness and his coming as cause for rejoicing.

In addition, Payne’s view can only be accepted if you accept his larger general approach to the interpretation of Joel 2. What he does with Joel 2 as a whole, is he says 2:1-11 is an impending contemporaneous local plague in the time

of Joel. In other words, he doesn't take that as apocalyptic or symbolic. It's an impending contemporaneous locust plague. 2:19-26 he sees as a contemporary deliverance from invading locusts, and, of course, verse 23 is in the middle of that. So when 23 says, "He gives the teacher for righteousness" it is not the Messiah or the leader of the sect at Qumran but seemingly the prophet Joel referring to himself and his own preaching.

Well, what does he do with 26b if that was all fulfilled in his own time? 26b says, "Never again will my people be ashamed." Payne says 26b and 27 are the future messianic teaching. In other words, there was a time gap between 26a and 26b. He moved 26 from Joel's time to the end time. That's that question that we talked about concerning time perspective, and there are clear examples where you're almost forced to say there's a time gap. I think as a hermeneutical principle it's possible, but is there a reason to do that here? It seems to me the flow of the text is pretty natural. So I think, the whole chapter is looking to the future. One additional consideration is the inhabitants of Qumran evidentially interpreted the word as "teacher" because their leader was known as the teacher of righteousness. Where did this title come from if not in Joel's teaching? So I'm inclined to take 2:23 as "teacher for righteousness" not "autumn rains and righteousness"; and see chapter 2, as I have said, as descriptive of things that will come to pass before the coming or in connection with the coming of the day of the LORD.

#### Vannoy's Analysis: Covenant Way, Teacher and Rain Connections

Now I want to just add to those comments a few others that are not on that handout about the connection between walking in the way of the covenant and the blessing of rain. I think in this verse, 2:23, with this *moreh/yoreh*, you have at least some element of a play on words and a connection of concepts that are rooted back in earlier passages of the Old Testament. If you go to Exodus 24:12, you read there, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and stay here and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commands I have

written” and those last two words there, “for their instruction.” That is a Hophal verb form. It’s that same root that *moreh* and *yoreh* come from. So, “I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.” A *Hophal* form of *yora*.

Turn to Leviticus 26:3-5. There you read, “If you will follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands I will send you rain in its season and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit; your threshing will continue until grape harvest and grape harvest will continue until planting and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.” So rain is given in this text. The rain is the Hebrew word *geshem*; it’s that other word that’s used in the end of the passage. Rain is given when the Israelites follow the Torah, the instructions.

Turn to 1 Kings 8:35-36. This is the prayer of Solomon on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple, and in that prayer he says, “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray towards this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven, forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel.” Then notice what follows, “Teach them the right way to live and send rain.” “Teach” is *yoreh* again, “Teach them the right way to live and send rains.” See this connection between teaching and walking in the right way and the giving of rain. “Send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.”

Go to Isaiah 30:20 and following. Isaiah says, “Although the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers,” that’s *moreh*, “will be hidden no more. With your own eyes you will see them.” You look in the Hebrew text and the “them” there is your teachers, teacher is repeated, *moreh*. “Whether you turn to the right or to the left your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’” walk in the way of the Torah. “Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold, you will

throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them away with you,” What follows in verse 23? “He will also send you rain.”

So, you get a number of passages where there’s a connection between walking in the way of the covenant, teachers, and rain. So that the language of Joel 2:23 is not something that is unprecedented in earlier passages in the Old Testament. It seems to me that this provides at least, some measure of response to the usual arguments that it makes no sense to translate the first part of 23b as, “He has given you a teacher for righteousness.” It is claimed that it makes no sense to translate *moreh* there as “teacher” because the rest of the verse is talking about rain. See the last part is, “He sent you abundant showers, autumn and spring rains as before.” Just because those last lines are talking about rain, doesn’t make it inappropriate for the preceding line to be talking about a teacher. There’s abundant previous reference in the Old Testament that connects teacher and rain and walking in the way of the covenant.

So, it seems to me that a good case can be made that God will give a prophet or a teacher who will teach you to walk in the right way and this will lead to the temporal blessing of rain. So the verse makes perfect sense and it is consistent with previous usages of similar language and association of words.

### 3. Joel 2:28-32 and Its Connection to Acts 2:14ff – Different Approaches

Let’s go on to number 2, Joel 2:28-32. There is the outline of the book of Joel that we’re following. Roman numeral I, which is chapter 1, “Description of the contemporary locust plague.” Then section 2 of the book from 2:1 to 3:21, at least in my view, contains “Three descriptions of the coming day of the Lord,” emphasizing different aspects. We just looked at a. under that which is 2:1-27, first description of the day of the LORD.” b. 2:28-32, “The second description of the coming of the Day of the Lord, and here the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit will precede the Day of the Lord. So, let’s pick up and go forward from there.

In Hobart Freeman's *Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, he lists 5 different interpretations of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-31, which in the Hebrew text is chapter 3 of Joel. The question is, was Joel's prophecy of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:14-24? If it was, in what sense was it fulfilled? Now we should probably turn to Acts 2. In Acts 2:14 you read, "Peter stood up with the eleven raised his voice, addressed the crowd, 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose, it's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,'" then he quotes from Joel 2:28 and following and says, "In the last days God said, 'I will pour out my spirit upon the people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions,'" and so on. I think 2:16 is a pretty strong statement when Peter says, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

But keep that in mind as you look at these five views. There's a "Termination at Pentecost" view. Ridderbos held that the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is to be applied to certain events of Joel's time, as well as on Pentecost at which time the prophecy terminated. Several Jewish interpreters, according to Keil, saw in the prophecy a reference to some event in Joel's own time with its fulfillment terminating at the end time.

b. is "Fulfillment at Pentecost," a prophecy of the messianic age when the Spirit of God is poured out on all flesh, and the gospel will be offered to all. The fulfillment of the prophecy is found in Acts 2:17, when the Holy Spirit was out poured at Pentecost.

c. "A non-fulfillment or eschatological view." "When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost it was not in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This prophecy has never been fulfilled, nor will it be fulfilled in the present age, in which the church is being formed." This is Gaebelin articulating a sort of classic dispensational view. "After this is accomplished the Lord will begin his relationship with his earthly people [Israel]; when he appears in his day then they

will experience the fulfillment of this great prediction.” So he is really saying you have two people, Israel and the church, and this concerns Israel. It was not fulfilled. The church is that mystery or parenthesis that the Old Testament knows nothing about.

d. “The typical fulfillment view” sees the prophecy of Joel as being fulfilled “in earnest” at Pentecost, but not fully realized until the millennium. This is set forth in the Jamieson, Fauset, and Brown commentary. It’s double sense, fulfilled at Pentecost but to be completed with final fulfillment eschatologically. Pentecost says, “Peter is not citing the experience before them as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy but is citing it as an analogy to its fulfillment in the millennial age.”

And then e. “A continuous fulfillment view,” the prophecy of Joel will have continuous fulfillment from Pentecost to eschatological time. So those are the five options out there. People have gone in different directions with this.

Joel 2:28

So let’s look at the prophecy. If you go to 2:28 in Joel you read, “And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and all the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness, the moon to blood before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”

“Afterwards,” and/or “in the Last Days”

So let’s look at this a little more closely. It begins with the words the NIV translates “and afterwards.” The Septuagint translates that “after these things.” In

Peter's quotation of this in Acts 2:17, he replaces "afterwards" with another, what I would say is, a more precise time designation. Instead of that general "afterwards" he says, "in the last days." If you look at Acts 2:17, "'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon them.'" So, it seems to me that Peter interpretively replaces "afterwards" with the more precise time designation "in the last days." This then is the sense in which the phrase is to be understood. This means that it is not to be taken with direct sequential reference to what precedes it in the Joel 2 context.

In other words, when you go back to 2:28 and it says, "and afterward" after he came, that's not talking about after what is described in verse 27. Joel 2:27 says, "You will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, that there is no other, never again will my people be shamed." Then you're starting a new section here in verse 28. That time designation is talking about the last days, it doesn't have sequential reference to what precedes it in the Joel 2 context. Remember that in the Hebrew text there's a separate chapter beginning with Joel 2:28. Although, of course, that was not in the original text but there was understood to be a break there, going way back. From the New Testament citation it appears that "afterwards" is used in Joel 2:28 in the sense of indicating a new period in God's dealing with His people. "And afterwards" is this new period in which I will do something for my people, that's what in view. "The last days" are understood as beginning with Christ's first advent and then will end with the second advent and the events related to it.

Seems to me if he wrote some of those texts I listed there, that is a pretty common way in which the "last days" is used in the New Testament and the time between the advents. That's the introductory time designation and it is best to understand "afterwards" in the sense that Peter interpreted it adding, "in the last days," this new period of God's dealing with his people and the time between the advents, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

## Pouring out of the Spirit

That phrase “I will pour out my spirit on all people” needs to be looked at a little more closely. In the Old Testament to get to the Spirit was not completely lacking; the Holy Spirit was certainly active in the Old Testament period. But now the Spirit in this new period of divine activity is to be poured out on all flesh. There’s something new that is to happen.

In the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit is referred to in connection with enablement for particular tasks or functions in the theocracy for certain select individuals. If you look at references to the Holy Spirit, those are the kind of references you find. For example, the Spirit came upon the craftsmen who built the tabernacle, Exodus 31:3, and enabled them to do their artistic work. The Holy Spirit comes on a number of the judges, Judges 6:34 and 11:29; enabling them to deliver Israel from their oppressors. The Holy Spirit comes upon Saul and David when they were becoming kings in 1 Samuel 16:13-14 to equip them for the tasks in the theocracy that had been given to them. The Holy Spirit comes upon the prophets to enable them to speak God’s words, 2 Samuel 20:32-38. In such cases, the Spirit came upon these individuals to qualify and to consecrate them for their particular task in the theocracy.

In the new period, about which Joel speaks, the Spirit will come on all flesh this is a general term (*basar*: flesh), but implies that the work of the Spirit will not be limited to certain leaders of the people, and, if not directly certainly by implication, extends the gift beyond the people of Israel, to all flesh; it’s not necessarily confined to Israel.

Now having said that, this need not be understood as implying that the Holy Spirit did not function in Old Testament times to affect regeneration and spiritual growth of God’s people even though there’s no explicit reference in the Old Testament to the Spirit’s work of that sort.

## Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Leon Wood, in a work called, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, discusses numerous Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit. There's not a lot of literature out there on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament period. I think that little book, by Leon Wood is as good a discussion of that as you'll find. It's unfortunately out of print—you might have come across it somewhere, but it's a very helpful discussion of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. His conclusion is that just because there's no reference in the Old Testament to the Spirit's work in effecting spiritual renewal in a person, that is not sufficient reason to conclude that the Spirit was not active at this point. Abraham and David and others are examples of men of faith. Did they achieve such by their own efforts apart from the Spirit of God? Did they have some resource that some New Testament believers do not have? The evidence that the Spirit was at work in the lives of Old Testament saints is to be seen in the way they lived. If their lives showed the fruits of the Spirit which are defined in the New Testament, then the Spirit must have been at work in them. How can a life exhibit the fruit of the Spirit if the Spirit is not at work in the person to produce it?

On the basis of New Testament teaching on the work of the Spirit we can deduce that Old Testament saints were regenerated just as New Testament saints are. Now that is admittedly a deduction but it seems to me a legitimate theological deduction. Why doesn't the Old Testament discuss regeneration? Wood says, "The answer can only be that God saw fit to wait with this revelation until New Testament time." So basically it seems that this is a legitimate conclusion.

Quoting Abraham Kuyper, who also wrote a volume on the work of the Holy Spirit, Wood says, "Believing Israelites were saved. Hence they must have received saving grace, a logical conclusion, and since saving grace is out of the question without an inward working of the Holy Spirit, it follows that he was the worker of faith in Abraham as well as in ourselves." I think that kind of sums up the issue.

### Difference of the Work of the Spirit in the OT and NT [Wood]

But if that's so, then what is the difference between of the work of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times and in the new period of the last days? The Holy Spirit was at work regenerating, sanctifying, in the lives of Old Testament saints—what's this prophecy of Joel talking about? In the last days in the time between the advents of Christ I'm going to pour out my Spirit on all flesh. What's the difference?

Wood points out that a number of terms are commonly associated with the Spirit's work in the New Testament, they include: regeneration, indwelling, sealing, filling, empowering and baptism. Wood argues, and he does this I think quite well in his book, that regeneration, indwelling, sealing, filling and empowerment are all to be found in both dispensations. It is then only the baptism of the Spirit that is new in the New Testament—that's his thesis. It's this aspect of the Spirit's work that began at Pentecost. Now I quote from Wood, "The reason for this is that baptism has to do with the church, and the church did not begin as a distinct organism until Pentecost. In fact, it was the baptism of believers by the Holy Spirit that inaugurated the church.... It began when believers were baptized to form it. This happened when the Spirit came upon the believers assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-12."

### Baptism of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13-14

The truth of baptism by the Spirit is set forth in 1 Corinthians 12:13-14. If you ask the question, "what is baptism by the Spirit?" 1 Corinthians 12:13 defines it saying, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." So, Wood comments, "The baptism of the Spirit is that work which joins Christians together into a common bond of church relationship." If you go to 1 Corinthians 12:13 in its context, the context there is a passage where Paul is

speaking about the unity of the body of Christ. We are one body, and baptism by the Spirit brings that sense of being the body of Christ and the unity that exists between believers across racial, ethnic, and linguistic barriers. There is now this one body; a spiritual body of the unity in Christ. That is what baptism does. Baptism is the “work which joins Christians together in the common bond of church relationship. It unites them, giving them an organic oneness. It provides them with a sense of mutual love, and sets before them a common purpose. It is because of this unifying baptism that Christians, wherever they meet, feel an immediate closeness and friendship. They are one group, a part in one grand enterprise...”

“The moment of baptism is the same as the moment of regeneration; in fact, it is the same also as the moment when indwelling and sealing begin... The reason baptism’s being instituted at Pentecost—which is another way of stating the reason for the inauguration of the church—was that there was a need for the spread of the gospel message. Christ had now lived and died and the good news of salvation was ready to be taken to a lost world. Through Old Testament days, God had in large part segregated his word in Israel, until the provision for man’s salvation might be made in the work of Christ. Now that this had been done, there was no longer need for segregation. The world at large should hear of the wonderful provision. No longer should there be a special people—in terms of a nation—but a universal people, without barrier or ‘middle wall of partition’ between them. For this reason, a new organism was called for, established on a different basis than the nation Israel. This organism was the church. The organism needed unity, a sense of oneness, so it could recognize and present itself as a common group. This was supplied initially by the collective baptism of believers at Pentecost, and continues to be provided by a continuing baptism of individuals at the time of their regeneration.”

Now Wood says, “The last matter to notice is that baptism involves a certain aspect of empowerment for the believer.... This power for gospel

proclamation was promised already by Christ in Luke 24:49, 'Tarry here in the city of Jerusalem until you be endowed with power from on high.' Jesus again promised it in Acts 1:8, just before his ascension to heaven, 'But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and all of Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.'" So you see what Wood is suggesting is the pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh is something that is to happen in the last days, preceding the day of the Lord, and it involves this baptism by the Spirit and empowerment for the proclamation of the Gospel. That's what's new, that's what's different from the Old Testament period. That's connected with the difference that now begins in the organization of God's people in the transition from a national body to a spiritual body, that crosses ethnic and national boundaries.

Wood's discussion of course raises the question of Israel and the church. There are those who have posited, I think too much, discontinuity between the church and Israel. The view that this wasn't being fulfilled at Pentecost but is to be fulfilled in future time in Israel, this great parenthesis is where extremes formulate. It is a dispensation view which sees no continuity of two peoples, two destinies and two ways of salvation; in short, a total discontinuity. Others have made too little distinction between Israel and the church. In other words, some would say the church is in the Old Testament.

Seems to me there is one people of God but the principle of organization is different. It's national in the Old Testament, it's supra-national in the New Testament, where it's spiritual qualities compared to this national and ethnic organization. So others have made too little distinction; they are equated without sufficient recognition of the different principle of organization and the new economy of God's dealing with His people, which is inaugurated with God's pouring out of his Spirit at Pentecost. The biblical perspective is that of one people of God, yet two distinct forms of organization. There is continuity in one way of salvation by grace through faith. I think that's clear. I don't think people were

saved by works in the Old Testament but by grace in the New Testament. That's too much discontinuity. There is at the same time a measure of continuity in the change from a national to a supra-national spiritual body. So it's a matter of keeping continuity and discontinuity in proper perspective, and that's often not done.

#### Return to Joel 2:28a and the Work of the Spirit in Acts

Now let's go back to our text. Joel 2:28a says, "I'll pour out my spirit on all people" and then goes on to say, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days." How do we understand verses 28 and 29? The meaning here seems to be that the Spirit will be given in discernable ways to God's people regardless of their age, sex, station, or position in life, even slaves will be recipients of the fruits of the Spirit. That's all flesh and all sorts of people will be given the Spirit.

When interpreting the significance of the expressions, "prophesy," "dream dreams," "see visions," it seems quite reasonable to follow the suggestion of Calvin when he says that Joel here speaks in the terms of the commonly known Old Testament conceptions of the function of the Holy Spirit. In other words, he's using the language that was understood about the way in which the Holy Spirit functioned in the time of Joel. They should not be rigidly interpreted as restricted to only these specific functions in respect to their fulfillment. It also should not be assumed that prophesying is to be limited to sons and daughters since it says "your sons and daughters will prophesy." Only sons and daughters will prophesy? Or that "dreaming dreams" will be limited to old men. This usage, as Keil suggests, can best be taken as "rhetorical individualizing." In other words, that what is being said here is that the manifold work of the Holy Spirit will be demonstrably given to individuals in all walks of life in the new era of which Joel speaks. All the manifold works of the Holy Spirit will come up on people from every age and

every function in society.

Jesus had promised that the Spirit would come, in various New Testament texts in the gospel. The disciples no doubt looked forward to the realization of this promise. In Acts 1:4-7 after the resurrection Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to “wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” Look at Acts 1 there, something interesting happened. You read in verse 4 he says, “Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” What’s the response? Look at verse 6, “So when they met together they asked, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

Jesus said, “Don’t leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” The interesting thing about the response of the disciples is the statement that they ask Jesus, “Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” It is clear that for some reason the disciples linked the coming of the Spirit with the coming of the Kingdom. Seems to me that there is no other way to understand their response there. Jesus says, “Wait for the promise of the Spirit that I told you about.” What does the Spirit have to do with the coming of the kingdom? Why would they link the coming of the Spirit with the coming of the kingdom? The most likely explanation is that they knew very well the connection Joel had made between the coming of the Spirit and the coming of the day of the Lord, because you see in this passage in 2:28 and following, this pouring out of God’s Spirit in verse 28 flows right into verse 31 when “the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” The pouring out of the Spirit is

going to precede the coming of the day of the Lord. They associated the two. Both belong to the same era of the last days.

Jesus' response however avoids a specific commitment to when the restoration of the kingdom of Israel will take place. It seems best then to understand the fulfillment of 28 and 29 as beginning at Pentecost and continuing into the period of the last days. This is at least my view. Peter says clearly the events which transpired in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were what was spoken by the prophet Joel. The notion of a continuous fulfillment should be distinguished from a view of partial fulfillment or typical fulfillment. The prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost and continues to be fulfilled throughout period of the last days. The time span on the last days is unknown. How long is the time gap? It's obviously, since Pentecost till now, a couple thousand years. So it seems to me that that's what is in view.

#### 4. Joel 2:30-32 Signs and the Spirit on Pentecost

Let's go on to Joel chapter 2 verses 30 to 32. The prophecy goes on to announce, signs in the heavens and earth that both precede the dark and terrible day of the Lord. It seems best in my view to regard these signs as yet to be fulfilled. One may ask why Peter quoted almost the entire passage, if only part of it was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost? Seems to me that we have here an example of prophetic time perspective in which two things are juxtaposed, both of which belong to the last day but are separated by an unannounced period of time. Both the giving of the Spirit to all flesh and the day of the Lord belong to the period of God's dealing with his people that was beginning at that particular point. The period of time separating the two advents of Christ is never indicated in Scripture. Rather the idea is imminence, that it could occur at any time, in regard to the end time. Therefore, be ready, is what it says.

My view is that there is a future for Israel in some sense. Seems to me there is too much emphasis in the Old Testament in numerous prophecies about the

dispersion and exile, in the next return to the land. But I do look for a teacher for Israel and it seems to me from Romans 9-11 that Paul supports that. But that's what's behind that statement.

#### Bavinck (*Reformed Dogmatics*) on the Spirit

Let me just pull your attention to a paragraph by Herman Bavinck in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. It is interesting that Herman Bavinck wrote a four volume theology, an excellent piece of work. It was not translated into English for a long time. It is being translated right now; first two or three of the four volumes have been published in the last couple years. I don't think they've got the fourth volume. But I thought this paragraph on the Holy Spirit was worth inserting here. Notice what he says, "The first activity which Christ accomplished after his glorification consists in the sending of the Holy Spirit. Because he was exalted at the right hand of God and received the promise of the Holy Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit promised by God in the Old Testament; he could now send this one to his people on earth (Acts 2:33)... Before the ascension the Holy Spirit was not, because Christ was not yet glorified." That's an interesting statement in John 7:39 that I think is easily misunderstood. Bavinck says, "This cannot mean that the Holy Spirit did not exist before the glorification of Christ because in the Old Testament there is constant talk of God's Spirit." So when John 7:39 says, before the ascension the Holy Spirit was not because "Jesus was not yet glorified," it doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit didn't exist, it can't. "And the Gospels tell us that John the Baptist and Elizabeth were filled with the Holy Spirit." There is filling prior to Pentecost. In Luke 1:15 it says that "Simeon was by the Spirit in the temple," Luke 2:26-27. That Jesus was anointed by the Spirit without measure, John 3:34. And the intention also cannot be that the disciples did not know that a Holy Spirit existed before Pentecost. Because they were taught by the Old Testament and by Jesus himself. Even the disciples of John had said to Paul at Ephesus that they at their baptism not only had not received the Holy Spirit but had not heard if there

was a Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2).

This does not thereby indicate that the existence of the Holy Spirit was unknown to them but only says that an extraordinary working of the Holy Spirit, that is the wonderful work at Pentecost, they had not heard of. They knew very well that John was a prophet sent by God and endued with his Spirit, but they had remained disciples of John and had not become disciples of Jesus. Thus they remained outside the circle of believers who received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The event which took place on this day therefore can have no other meaning than that the Holy Spirit, who earlier already existed and gave many gifts and worked many powers, presently, after the ascension of Christ from his people is now come to live in his people as in his temple.” Notice this next statement is great because it is so striking, “The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is, after the creation and incarnation, the third great work of God.” Now as Bavink said, there are three great works of God: creation, incarnation and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. It is an enormously significant event. This extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit was repeatedly promised in the Old Testament and so you don’t want to minimize the significance of what happened at Pentecost. It seems to me what continues to happen in the life and experience of every believer from the day of Pentecost to present. There is in the last days a continual pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all those who were regenerated into this one body and then empowering them to spread the gospel. That’s what this is all about.

#### Joel 2:31 AND THE Work of the Spirit in Acts

Let’s go a little bit further, the day of the Lord is mentioned in Joel chapter 2 verse 31, as it was in 2:11. In my view these three verses are speaking of the coming of the Day of the Lord. Here, however, it comes subsequent to the pouring out of the Spirit and the cosmic signs in the heavens. This passage thus assumes an important place in sketching the progress of the history of redemption. We

learn in this passage that the sending of the Spirit will precede the day of the coming of the Lord. Several things may be inferred from this in this period in which the Spirit is poured out. The fullness of God's Kingdom has not yet been revealed because it precedes the Day of the Lord.

And second, this period may appropriately be characterized as the period of the Spirit in the last days, the time between the advents. What follows on the remainder of this handout is discussion of the work of the Spirit, particularly as pictured in the book of Acts. The Spirit directed Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, the Spirit led Peter to Cornelius, the Spirit drove the church to Antioch, the Spirit guided the church on crucial questions arising from the missionary tasks, the Spirit would not allow Paul to enter Asia, and so on and so on. So you know some people wrote and said, instead of being entitled, "The Acts of the Apostles" it should be entitled, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" because that's what flows through the remainder of the book.

##### 5. Comments on Joel 3: Judgment on the Nations and Salvation of God's People

Let me just very quickly make a few comments on the third passage, which is Joel chapter 3 in the English Bible, chapter 4 in the Hebrew Bible. This third passage on the coming of the day of the Lord I've given the heading, "The Judging of the Nations and the Salvation of God's People." Let me just make a few comments then because I wasn't going to deal with this in great detail. It is Joel 3:1-21 in your English Bible and chapter 4 in the Hebrew Bible.

Joel 3:1 In those days

You get a time designation again to introduce this passage, notice Joel 3:1, "In those days and at that time." In what days, and at what time? I don't think it's again just like the preceding passage referring to what went before. I think that "in those days and at that time" is really defined by what follows in verse one, "In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I

will gather all nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.” So it’s, “in the days when I do those things.” So the time designation has reference to the following phrase rather than to what immediately precedes; and the phrase introduces the third passage describing the coming day of the Lord.

### Valley of Jehoshaphat

So, Joel says, “In those days in that time when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem I will gather the nations, bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel.” Where is the valley of Jehoshaphat where the Lord will gather all nations and judge them? Some suggest it’s the valley of Beracah, based on 2 Chronicles 20:26, where Jehoshaphat defeated the Moabites and the Ammonites. The problem with that is that valley is not called the valley of Jehoshaphat, it’s called the valley of Beracah. If you reflect on the name, “the Valley of Jehoshaphat,” Jehoshaphat means “the Lord has judged.” It has the Hebrew root *shaphat* and the prefix of that “the Lord had judged.” Since the Valley is the location of a judgment of the Lord it is possible to take the name as symbolic of the judgment rather than as a geographical place name. If you go to verse 14 you have a similar reference, “multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” So I’m not sure we should try to pin it down to a precise geographical location. This is the place where the Lord will enter into judgment against the nations that have gathered against Israel.

### Joel 3:2 – Judgment on the Nations

Verse 2 speaks of all the nations with which the Lord will enter into judgment. Now what is that judgment? Who is it that is to be judged? It seems to me that the judgment is simply the victory that will be won by the Lord at his appearance in power and glory when the enemies of returned Israel are drawn up

to battle prior to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Now of course that assumes there is such thing as a millennial kingdom. I would relate this to texts like Zechariah 14:2 where you read, “I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it. The city will be captured, the houses ransacked, the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,” which is the second coming. Seems to me that refers back to chapter 2. You may associate it with Revelation 19 as well.

When you get down a little further in the passage you read in verse 9, “Proclaim this among the nations, prepare for war, rouse the warriors, let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plow shares into swords, your pruning shears into spears.” Notice the reversal of the Isaiah passage? Beat your spears into plowshares; this is the reversal of that. “Let the weakling say, ‘I am strong.’ Come all ye nations from every side assemble there. Bring your warriors let the nations be roused, let them advance into the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side.” That judgment is simply the victory that the Lord achieves over the nations that are assembled against Israel. So the battle and the trial are the same thing. So I think I’ll leave my comments with that but that’s the third passage describing the coming of the day of the Lord in association with this judgment of the nations.

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