



LIFE WITH GOD:

This is That

By: *Peter Bales*

No. 27, April 28, 2024

Don't you love when somebody predicts that something will happen and they say, "See, I told you so!" We may not appreciate their gloating in this case, but in a similar manner, God predicted things in the Old Testament that didn't happen for centuries! Let's look at one of those occasions in Acts. The Holy Spirit had just been poured out on the disciples and the crowds who were around, "...made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." READ more in Acts 2:14-21.

This is a big moment. Something incredible is going on. Yet what does Peter get up and say? He says that THIS was prophesied by a guy named Joel hundreds of years ago! This was that!

1. What sticks out to you in what Peter said to the crowds?

It's interesting when the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament. Often it may read a little differently because the Apostles were likely using a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint that was translated around 250 BC. It's also interesting because Peter quotes from the book of Joel.

We don't know exactly when Joel was written. The setting is during a plague of locusts when the Israelites were not following the ways of God. In Joel 2:13 it says, "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity." The people are under the judgment of God, but he's inviting them to repent! Then we get to this passage in Joel 2:28-32 that Peter quotes from. It says that later, God will pour out his Spirit on all people! Peter stands up and says that "later" is now!

2. What do you think it means that Joel's prophecy came to pass when the Holy Spirit was poured out?

Is it confusing to hear that Peter said he was living in the "last days?" It might be helpful to think about this in context of the Covenant with Moses, or the "law" given in Exodus and Deuteronomy. After the Resurrection, God was doing a new thing and the time of the Mosaic Law was coming to an end! This ending of the "Age of Law" and the beginning of the New Covenant is in the background of the entire New Testament. For a period of time, there was overlap between the two. Scholars argue about the end of the Mosaic Law, but by the time that the temple was destroyed in 70 AD and then the Jews were either killed or driven out of Jerusalem in 135 AD, the Jewish sacrificial system that had been given to Moses was all but extinct and Judaism took an entirely different form.

3. What are ways that you see the tension between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant in the New Testament?

Joel says that the Spirit will be poured out on all people so that “sons and daughters will prophesy.” This can mean a lot of different things, but the simplest definition might say that to prophesy is to “say what God is saying.” Sometimes, it means something in the future, but often it’s just sharing God’s perspective and sharing a message from the Lord. However, just because you can prophesy doesn’t mean that you are a prophet! The Bible emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is for everyone—we are all equipped to hear from the Lord and say what he is saying!

4. How have you understood what prophesy is? How might this be different?

5. What are ways that you’ve been able to say what God is saying? How was it received? What is hard about this?

The end of this passage in Joel has language of judgment, such as, “the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,” etc. These are the types of warnings common in the Bible about judgment coming to a people, often through invasion or physical hardships. (The sun isn’t literally turned to darkness, of course.) Since Peter quotes this, how does the coming of the Holy Spirit relate to Judgment?

Let’s remember what John the Baptist said when he was talking about Jesus: “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and *fire*” (John 3:11 NIV). The “baptism of fire” is usually thought to mean that God will bring judgment—a type of cleansing or purifying fire that makes things right.

Another way to think about this is that the coming of the Holy Spirit *pushes back* the darkness—it’s an *inbreaking*. It’s just like a light that comes on and makes the darkness go away! It’s interesting that when the Spirit came there were something like “tongues of fire” that separated over the heads of the believers that were gathered.

In John 16: 18-19, Jesus spoke to Peter and told him, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [Hell] will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” The “gates of Hell” are no match for the Holy Spirit residing in the church!

6. In what ways do you think that the coming of the Holy Spirit is connected to Judgment?

7. What are ways that you’ve seen the Holy Spirit come and “push back” the darkness?

8. What can we learn from Peter’s message about living with the Holy Spirit for today?

GOING DEEPER>> READ Hebrews 8 and consider how the New Covenant is different and “better” than the covenant of Moses.