

THE EARLY AND THE LATTER RAIN

BIBLE TEXT : Joel 2:21-32; Acts 2:1-47

LESSON 66 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "And It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Joel 2:21-32

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 caterpiller, 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.
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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Great Joy Promised

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice." At the time Joel wrote these words there was little for the Children of Israel to rejoice about. They had departed from God, had forsaken the true worship, and His judgment had come upon them. The Babylonians had overrun the land of the Israelites and made them slaves. Their crops had dried up, and insects had eaten the little that did grow. But Joel was a prophet of the Lord; and through him God was proclaiming a new era, a time when prosperity would come again.

Imagine the change that was to come upon the land. God was going to send rain, and the fig tree that had dried up would bear fruit again; grapes would grow upon the vines again — so many that the vats would not contain the juice. God was going to restore to the people all that the cankerworms and caterpillars had eaten. Was that not something to rejoice about?

Modern Drought

Only a few years ago we saw in our own land what happened when God withheld rain. A section of the Midwest became known as the Dust Bowl, and crops were destroyed. The people became destitute and left their farms that would no longer support them. The government considered many plans to bring water to that part of the country, but nothing was accomplished until God again sent rain. Now we read of fortunes being made in what was so recently the Dust Bowl. Rain has fallen and bumper crops have made the people rich. One county is said to be the richest, per capita, of any county in the United States. That shows us what happens when God keeps the rain from falling, and that it is in His hands to bring prosperity to the land.

The Early and Latter Natural Rain

Think of the eager expectation in the heart of Joel as he told the people of the joys before them! He believed the words of God, and could rejoice in faith.

In the beginning of Jewish history there had always been an early rain which fell during the seedtime in the fall. There was some rain through the winter; and then, just before the harvest, about the first of April, heavy showers fell. This was called the latter rain, and prepared the grain for the harvest. But because of the sins of the Israelites, there had been little rain for many years. Now the promise was that the rains would fall again and bring new life to their land. How happy that should have made them!

Spiritual Rain

Joel was speaking of another kind of rain, also. The people had been unhappy, because they had departed from God; but when the Spirit of God would be poured out there would be songs of praise from the hearts of those who received it. It was to be to everyone, not only the priests who in their day represented God to man and man to God. The promise was: "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: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I

Acts 2:1-47

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

⁷ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

⁸ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

⁹ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

pour out my spirit."

How Joel's heart must have leaped as he thought about the great spiritual outpouring that was to come upon the people! Everyone, the old and young, the rich and poor, the men and women, would be able to share in the marvelous blessings. The Spirit that Joel was talking about was the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which was so wonderful that Peter tells us even the angels desired to look into it **1 Peter 1:12** 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.

Jesus' Teaching about the Holy Ghost

For many years after Joel made his joyful declaration, the people continued to live in a dreary land, and the Spirit of God was not poured out upon them. Then one happy day Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and the hearts of people began to rejoice at His preaching. He told His disciples that His Kingdom was not of this world. He could not stay with them and be in every place in His human body, but after He had gone back to Heaven He would send them another Comforter, whom He called the Spirit of Truth. He would abide with them (each one individually) forever. He would be their Teacher, and would remind them of the things Jess had told them.

Pentecost

When Jesus was about to be caught up into Heaven, as He stood with His disciples on Mount Olivet, He told them to return to Jerusalem and wait for the Promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. About one hundred twenty obeyed Him. They tarried in the upper room, praying earnestly and being all of one accord, until the answer came. On the Day of Pentecost there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind that filled the room where they were assembled, and the Spirit of God rested upon each one of them. They spoke in a different language than any they knew.

In the city at that time were people from all the lands about Palestine who had come to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost, and they heard the disciples speak in the languages of the foreigners. They were amazed that such poor, ignorant fishermen as some of the disciples were, should be able to speak in other tongues. But it was the Spirit of God speaking through them. That was the outward sign that they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost. Something more important than that happened at the same time: they received power to be witnesses! Jesus had said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The baptism did not fall upon the people for their own enjoyment, but that they might be witnesses. They were blessed to be a blessing.

Peter's Testimony

A new Peter now stood before the people. When Christ was to be crucified, Peter had been ashamed that he knew Him. When the angel told him that Jesus had risen from the dead, he wondered about it and could hardly believe it. But now he had received power, and was not afraid to stand before the Jews and accuse them of killing the divine Son of God. He told them that the disciples were not drunk, as some thought, but they had received the Spirit that Joel had prophesied about several hundred years before. Joel had said, "Rejoice." And those who received the baptism could hardly contain their joy. It filled their being and overflowed. Peter was no longer ashamed of the Christ he had

¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

²² Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

²⁵ For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: ²⁶ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: ²⁷ Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. ²⁹ Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ³⁰ Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ³¹ He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. ³² This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ³³ 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. ³⁴ For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵ Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel

once denied. Twice in Joel's prophecy God said, "And my people shall never be ashamed." When the Spirit of God is in us we are not backward about telling people of Jesus who saved our souls and keeps us living above sin.

When the Spirit of God is on His people, that Spirit speaks conviction to the unsaved. Three thousand who heard Peter on the Day of Pentecost were convicted of their sins and asked what they should do to be saved. They believed all that Peter said, and obeyed his teaching, and rejoiced in the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Some people believe that the baptism was poured out on the Day of Pentecost only for the founding of the Church and that it is not necessary for anyone else to have it. But that was not the teaching of Peter nor of Paul. Several years after Pentecost we find Peter visiting the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, and he, too received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The prophecy had been to all flesh. "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" (I Corinthians 12:13). Still later, when Paul was at Corinth, twelve persons received the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 19).

This was the Early Rain. Joel had also spoken about a Latter Rain that would fall in the first month (the month of April according to the Jewish calendar). Peter had said that the promise was to the people at Pentecost, but also "to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). There was going to come a time, then "afar off," when the Latter Rain would be poured out.

The church went through the Dark Ages, and for many centuries very little spiritual rain fell upon the earth. Neither did natural rain fall upon Palestine. Most of the land became a desert.

Rain in Palestine

Then, about the year 1900, the mists began to fall on the Holy Land. Could it be possible that the desert would bloom again? By the time the spiritual Latter Rain fell in 1906, the natural rain was falling in abundance in Palestine, and their land was bringing forth much fine fruit. The produce of that country has won prizes at our world-fairs.

The dry sands of Palestine had thirsted for the rain; and in like manner the Christian people of the early nineteen hundreds were thirsting for more of the Spirit of God.

Spiritual Awakening

Martin Luther had learned the truth that "the just shall live by faith," He had given up trying to do penance for his sins, and had, through repentance toward God, been justified by faith. In spite of much persecution, he remained faithful to God's call, and launched the Reformation.

Later John Wesley realized that the doctrine of Sanctification **was** for people today, just as Jesus had prayed: "Sanctify them through thy truth: . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:17-20). Sanctification was also called holiness. Many people accepted Wesley's teaching; and after they had their sins forgiven at justification, they sought sanctification, and had the carnal nature taken out. When Adam sinned in the Garden **he** brought the nature of sin upon every man. We cannot help having the Adamic nature born in us, but we can be rid of it through sanctification, a second work of grace wrought by the Blood. Then the heart is a clean vessel prepared to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Hungry Hearts

There were many people in the world just before 1906 whose hearts were cleansed vessels, and they were praying

know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

⁴¹ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

earnestly that God would send the Holy Spirit and baptize them. Their hearts were as the dry soil that had been sown and was waiting for the rain to make the seed grow.

Groups of people met in different churches in all parts of the country to pray for the Latter Rain. Each church thought theirs would be the one to receive the Promise, but it was not to come to any particular denomination. Upon the individual hearts that were pure and clean was the Spirit poured out.

The Latter Rain

On April 9, 1906, the first month according to the Jewish religious calendar, as Joel had prophesied, the Holy Spirit fell upon a humble band who had gathered to seek the Lord in a cottage on Bonnie Brae Street, Los Angeles. People received the baptism just as they did on the Day of Pentecost, and spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. How they rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to receive this Gift from Above! Praises filled their hearts to overflowing. Soon word came from other countries that the Holy Ghost had also fallen there upon the truly sanctified. Surely the land could be glad and rejoice, for God had poured out the Latter Rain.

False Tongues

Many people today profess to speak in tongues, but they do not have power to live clean lives, let alone be witnesses to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Satan has sent delusions upon the earth, and some people are believing a lie and are receiving a false baptism because they do not want to uncover the sins in their lives.

The Holy Spirit, that gentle Dove which is easily grieved, will not come into an unclean vessel. He makes His abode only in the heart that **is** wholly sanctified.

Sanctified Hearts

For more than forty years the Rain has been falling. Wherever the Lord has found sanctified and consecrated hearts that are hungering for the Holy Spirit, He has sent the Comforter to abide. The Spirit is preparing a Bride for the Son of God who will soon come for His own. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is the wedding garment without which no one will be ready to attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Holy Spirit, the Oil of Joy, is burning in the hearts of the Bride of Christ. Everyone who makes the consecrations can enjoy this blessing from above. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

QUESTIONS

- 1** What was the condition of the Israelites in Joel's time?
- 2** What promise did he make?
- 3** When was the Holy Spirit first poured out, and what was the outpouring of the Spirit called?
- 4** When was the Latter Rain poured out?
- 5** Who is eligible to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost?
- 6** Who is the Bride of Christ?