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Joel Overview (Part 2)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview of the book of Joel, Steve Gregg explains that the book is divided into two parts: the first dealing with the crisis of locusts in Joel's time, while the second part is about the age of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Gregg notes that while there is controversy surrounding the interpretation of certain passages, the overall message of the book is one of redemption and deliverance through God's grace. He also suggests that the latter half of Joel's prophecies pertain to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and the birth of the church, which continues until the return of Jesus.

Transcript

Okay, we've come to almost the exact halfway point in the book of Joel. And as I said, the book divides just about into equal parts in terms of numbers of verses. And the first part was about the crisis in Joel's own time, which clearly was a plague of locusts destroying the entire economy.

And it's not even the economy that's the problem. It's more like survival is the issue when you don't have food. When the crops of every kind and the vineyards and the fruit trees are all destroyed by locusts.

And then even the grass is destroyed. So the cattle and the sheep are starving. You really don't have much left to eat.

And this went on apparently for years, as we pointed out, because in chapter 2, verse 25, he said, I will restore the years that the locusts have eaten. So more than one year. So it's actually a tremendous disaster.

It's clear that it was because of the sins of the people of Judah, though their sins are not identified. In most prophets, they actually give long lists of God's complaint, what the sins are that he's complaining about. But here, I guess the people are pretty much supposed to be aware of what their sins are.

And they're called to have an assembly to fast and pray, cry out to God for mercy. And the section ends, of course, as one would anticipate, knowing how the prophets are, with

God promising that if they do turn to him, they will find this deliverance and he'll bless them and all the crops and the livestock and the vineyards and everything will be restored. And it'll be as good as it was.

He'll describe, he describes driving the locusts away and this all being a thing of the past. Now, having come to that point, we come to the second half of the book, which begins in chapter 2 and verse 28. And it's the most famous verse in the book because it describes the beginning of the church era or what we might call the age of the spirit when the spirit is poured out, or we might simply call the messianic age.

Turns out the Messiah is not mentioned particularly in this passage, but that's often the case. All the prophets anticipate a kingdom under the Messiah. And some of the prophets actually have descriptions of the Messiah himself as the king.

And other times they just describe the peaceable and just and joyful conditions that prevail under the king. So we could call it the kingdom age. The kingdom age would involve the king being the Messiah and the people enjoying the benefits of that kingdom.

I remember Paul said in Romans 14, 17, the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy spirit. And so these features of justice and righteousness and peace and prosperity and rejoicing are all ours in the spirit. The kingdom comes in the spirit.

That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus, unless you're born of the spirit, you cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. It's a spiritual thing. And so the age of the kingdom is also the age of the spirit and the age of the Messiah.

All of these are features of this one era that all the prophets talk about, but not all of them focus on the spirit. Not all of them even focus on the Messiah, but they all focus on aspects of this ultimate time of God's redemption and rescue and deliverance and salvation of his people. And we as Christians, of course, are particularly aware of the king himself because we live after the coming of Jesus and we recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

So we always think of this as the age when Jesus is running in and it is indeed, but the prophets don't always focus just on that, but on other things. In this case, Joel is sometimes called the prophet of Pentecost because the spirit is poured out at Pentecost. That's when the present era kind of begins.

It's hard to pinpoint it. We can say it began when Jesus rose from the dead, or we can say it happened when Jesus ascended to the throne and sat down at the right hand of God, or we can say it happened when the spirit came. All that was within a few weeks of each other.

This transitional era of a few weeks time was the inauguration of this new order that is described as coming and of course, which we live in. And it's the order that is from the first coming of Christ, especially from the outpouring of the spirit of Pentecost to the

second coming of Christ. That era, which has now been 2000 years.

This is the era we're talking about. At least that's what I believe we're talking about. It's only fair to mention there's another view and it's even the view that more people have probably heard.

And that is that a lot of this prophecy is about the end times. Especially when you get into chapter three, but even even features of the end of chapter two, many Christians see as a reference to the second coming of Christ or the time prior to the second coming of Christ. And therefore they believe that we have not leaped forward from Joel's time to the day of Pentecost, but that we have leaped forward from Joel's time to the end of the world and the time of Jesus second coming.

And this is, this is really the controversy that marks all discussion in the church over these kingdom era passages. The church has throughout history believed for the most part that Jesus inaugurated this era and that this is talking about Pentecost and, and that essentially the great judgment that took place after Jesus came and after Pentecost was the judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. But others believe that the prophets don't even look at the church age.

The dispensational view is that the church age was a mystery not even mentioned in the Old Testament and therefore it is jumping from, you know, the Old Testament time to the end of the New Testament time. The end of that which is still future even for us. So the big controversy is, is Jesus at his first coming the fulfillment of all these prophecies or is he going to fulfill it at his second coming? Those who believe it's going to count be his second coming believe that he will then reign for a thousand years on earth in what's called the millennium.

That would be called the pre-millennial view. For most of church history the church didn't believe in the pre-millennial view. They believe in what's called the amillennial view which identifies the age of the Messiah as the present age which was inaugurated at his first coming.

So I just let you know there's a controversy about that. I'll even let you know some of the things they say about these passages even when I don't agree with them including this one. In verse 28 it says, and shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions.

And also on my men servants and on my maid servants I will pour out of my spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth. Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness. The moon into blood before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance or salvation as the Lord has said among the remnant whom the Lord calls. Now believe it or not even though Peter quotes this section at least a major part of it and he even says this is that which the Holy Spirit which Joel said about the Holy Spirit coming. It certainly sounds like Peter saying this passage was fulfilled at that time.

There's still a very insistent group of theologians dispensations who say no it's not Pentecost was not this. They say that Peter did not say that this was the fulfillment when he was standing on Pentecost describing what was going on to the perplexed crowds. He did not say this is the fulfillment of what Joel said.

He only said this is that which Joel spoke about. And what they would say is yes the outpouring of the Spirit is like what Joel was talking about. Joel's talking about a last days outpouring of the Spirit.

He was not talking about Pentecost but the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. Well it's the same kind of phenomenon as happened at Pentecost. So Peter could say this is the same kind of thing that Joel talked about which is an extremely desperate argument in my opinion.

And I simply reject it because of its total desperateness to say this is that which was prophesied is certainly most reasonably I'm assuming this is the fulfillment of that which was prophesied. This fulfillment of that prophecy. But if you ever hear people like oh there's gonna be a last days outpouring of the Holy Spirit you know in the end times God's gonna be a part of the Spirit.

It's based on those who take this passage in that way. They want to believe this entire latter part of Joel is about the end times and the second coming of Christ. Why? Well a lot of it has to do with the fact that it describes judgment in terms which if taken literally would not really fit any time completely in the past.

There are strange things we're gonna find in these passages which most Bible scholars would recognize I think as apocalyptic imagery. But frankly dispensationalists do not like to acknowledge apocalyptic imagery. They like to say we take the prophets literally.

So for example when you come to chapter 3 in verse 18 where it says it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine and the hills shall flow with milk and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water. A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord and water to the valley of the Acacias. Now I want to point out the house of the Lord is Jerusalem's temple.

The valley of the Acacias is in Moab across the Jordan River from Jerusalem. So this has to be a river that flows across another river to water the other side. If we take this literally we're gonna have to say a time is coming when the mountains drip with new wine.

Now frankly that's not generally how wine comes to be. It doesn't drip out of the mountains. It usually grows in grape vines and then it's crushed and then fermented.

But it talks about the mountains dripping with new wine just like Moses said that God told Moses Canaan is land flowing with milk and honey. Well of course it doesn't mean that if you go to the streams flowing in Canaan and dip your your hands in there and pull it up to your mouth you'll find it's milk and honey. It's actually not so.

It didn't flow. This is a figure of speech. Certainly when it says the brooks of Judah, well when it says the hills will flow with milk in this passage.

But the hills don't flow with milk. Milk comes from cows and goats. And the hills could be covered with cows and goats because there's such lush vegetation it could be a very productive place for milk.

But to say the hills are flowing with milk is quite a poetic imagery. Likewise when it says a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord. Well literally many people believe that there will be a temple built and that from there shall a literal fountain of water will flow from there.

And apparently that will be a river that crosses another river and waters the other side. Now you know freeways and roads I should say you know solid roads can intersect and cross each other. Rivers can't do that.

There's something in the nature of liquid that doesn't allow that. Rivers can run together and then they become one. They don't cross each other and keep going as separate rivers.

That doesn't ever happen. But of course God can make anything happen and if you're truly saying well we have to take the Bible literally as these prophecies then you have to believe that God's gonna work some miracles. And you're gonna see you know wine and dripping out of mountains and you know milk flowing in their streams and a river coming out from the temple that goes across another river and waters Moab.

Now that's what it says is going to happen but I'm going to show you that that's obviously symbolic and that much language is symbolic. What I would point out is that when you find the places in the New Testament that refer to these passages they are not taken literally. The New Testament takes them spiritually.

Now however much of what's in the passage that Joel that Peter quoted from Joel can be

taken quite literally. Let me just turn you to Peter's actual quote first and then we'll look back at the passage in Joel. In Acts chapter 2 this is the first time Peter preached a sermon and this is the text.

The text was from Joel that he used. This is when the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the 120 Christians waiting in the upper room in Jerusalem and they all began they were all filled with the Spirit it says in verse 2 and or verse 4. They're filled with the Spirit and began to speak with other tongues and so forth. Now when they were doing that that was confusing to the crowds.

No one had ever spoken in tongues before. Languages they didn't ever learn and the crowd was wondering what's going on. Some thought well I can't understand what they're saying.

I think they're just drunk guys just you know mumbling. Others said you know they had other things to think perhaps but some actually accused them of being drunk with new wine. It's interesting maybe coincidental that the passage in Joel comes immediately after reference to God restoring the new wine.

You know the locust had brought an end to the new wine and the grain and now the new wine is going to be again and then we read about this outpouring of the Spirit and here were some of the people who heard it said it sounds like they've been drinking new wine. That's perhaps an insignificant coincidence but just something that is there. But then when Peter stood up to explain it in verse 15 he says these are not drunk as you suppose since it's only the third hour of the day meaning nine in the morning.

The Jewish day began at six in the morning so the third hour was nine in the morning. You know the you can't people aren't drinking and getting drunk at that time of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

He quotes it shall come to pass in the last days says God that I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh your sons and your daughters shall prophesy your young men shall see visions your old men shall dream dreams on my men servants and maids servants I will part of my spirit in those days and they shall prophesy I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath blood and fire and vapor of smoke the sun should be turned to darkness the moon to blood before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord and it shall come to pass that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now that's where Peter stops quoting. The passage actually goes on another verse in chapter two of Joel and so Peter didn't quote the whole passage.

It's interesting since he wasn't quoting the whole passage that he quoted as much of it as he did because he could have stopped in his quotation there in Acts chapter 2 in verse 18 because he quotes in here in Acts 2 17 18 he quotes the part about the Holy Spirit being poured out and that's what was going on. He said this is what what this is

what Joel said would happen and he could have quoted there in verse 17 18 and stopped and said there it is but he goes on although he doesn't quote everything Joel says he continues on further than you might think he needed to because he talks about judgment he talks about wonders signs blood you know vapor of smoke the sun turned to darkness the moon to blood and so forth. Now these phenomena we have just seen in Joel are somewhat figurative but also somewhat literal in that when a city is burning smoke fills the sky the sun is darkened to the view of the of the people in the city looking up the dark smoke blots off the light of the sun.

The moon can look blood red seeing it through haze and smog and fog so that the sun turned bloody and so forth that there's pillars of smoke certainly when when a city's burning there's pillars of smoke all the things he says there are can be literally true and were shortly after this Peter and the apostles had been told that within their generation Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jesus had described that to them in Matthew 24 the temple would be destroyed not one stone would be left standing on another this happened in 70 AD though the disciples didn't know how soon it would happen it had to happen within their generation because Jesus said so they didn't know you know how soon or late within their generation might be but he saw the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the precursor to the judgment on Jerusalem. Now realizing Joel the first half of Joel is about a judgment on Jerusalem taking the form of locusts the second half is also about a judgment on Jerusalem but before the judgment comes there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now there's not a reason in the world to suggest that when Peter said this is what Joel said that he was not saying this is the fulfillment of what Joel said of course that's what he meant that's what everyone would understand and they'd have a reason to because it is because the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh is exactly what many prophets predicted Joel's not the only one and it happened let me just show you a few other places where in the Old Testament the age of the Spirit or the age of Messiah is considered to be the age of the outpouring of the Spirit much of this is in poetic passages but for example in Isaiah there's quite a few passages where the destruction of Jerusalem which took place when the Babylonians conquered them is described as you know becoming a wilderness because the Jews went away into Babylon there's no one left to cultivate the land so the cultivated fields of Judah so they went to see they went to they went wild so they became a wilderness and the thorns and thistles and jackals inhabited them and so Isaiah often speaks about the time that you know that place which is currently cultivated by the Jewish farmers you know the fruitful field is going to become a wasteland a wilderness but that's not true only physically it's true spiritually too they became spiritually dry they became spiritually fruitless they became thorns and thistles as it were spiritually speaking but then Isaiah frequently speaks about how God will open up rivers in the wilderness and the the desert place will become a fruitful field and will blossom and bloom and fill the earth with its fruit and so forth so Isaiah has this

turnaround several times in several passages when Judah goes off into captivity the land literally becomes a wasteland when they come back from captivity they farm it again so the desert becomes uh you know fruitful again but it's also spiritual because Isaiah in in the number of times that he says this doesn't always bring this out but at least one time he makes it very clear what he's talking about in Isaiah chapter 32 he says in verses 12 through 15 people shall mourn their breasts for the pleasant fields for the fruitful vine on the land of my people will will come up thorns and briars yes on all the happy homes in the joyous city because the palaces will be forsaken the bustling city will be deserted the forts and towers will become layers forever a joy of wild donkeys a pasture of flocks until the spirit is poured out upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is counted as a forest in other words it's just a desert but when the spirit is poured out this is the the rivers in the desert that he brings it turns the the wilderness into a fruitful thing but this is spiritual fruit and we know it because of the next verse 16 justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness will remain in the fruitful field now this goes back to something i won't take you to right now but isaiah chapter 5 where israel is compared to a vine that god was seeking fruit from he could find no fruit so he's going to tear down the vine and let the wild beast trample it and of course it would become a wilderness again but he said the fruit i was looking for in isaiah 5 he said i was looking for justice i was looking for righteousness that's the vineyard israel is my vineyard the men of judah are his pleasant parents i looked for justice but i found oppression i looked for righteousness but i found a cry now that's the complaint god raises at the beginning of isaiah he had cultivated this vine looking for fruit what fruit justice and righteousness that's the fruit they didn't produce it so he tore down their hedge and let it be trampled and become a wilderness but then he's going to pour out his spirit and it will produce that fruit and that's why it says in verse 16 of this passage passage isaiah 32 then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness remain in the fruitful field notice the fruit the desert that wasn't producing any fruit israel when they were fruitless spiritually that now when the spirit is poured out that fruit will be produced justice and righteousness will be where the barren desert once was and there's many isaianic passages about uh either the fruit fulfilled becoming a wasteland or many other passages about the wasteland becoming a fruitful field and um and in many of the passages refer to water rivers in the desert springing up and so forth to cause this so but now it's in in isaiah 32 15 it specifically says that water in the desert that brings about the fruitfulness is the spirit being poured out so this has all been figured it he's going to pour out his spirit and that'll bring forth the fruit of the spirit in the lives of his true people that's what happened at the day of pentecost paul talks about how we produce the fruit of the spirit which is love joy peace gentleness meekness self-control all those things so our receiving the spirit has made us fruitful in in colossians chapter 1 paul says that the the believers in colossi have become fruitful in every good work they're producing fruit because the spirit has been poured out on them so this idea of god pouring out the spirit at the beginning of the new order and bringing fruit where there was fruitlessness israel was fruitless but remember jesus said to israel the kingdom of

god will be taken from you and given to a nation that will produce the fruit of it that's that's of course matthew 21 i think it's verse 43 or 44 that is israel was supposed to produce fruit they didn't so god says i'm going to take that opportunity from you israel i'm going to give it to someone else and they will produce fruit who's that that's us now it's not only isaiah but quite a few other i'm going to just give you a few others but there are more than this in ezekiel chapter 35 i'm sorry 36 ezekiel chapter 36 talking about the new coming of the new testament era he says this in verse 25 then i will sprinkle clean water on you and you should be clean i will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols i will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you i will take the heart of stone out of you out of your flesh and give your heart of flesh i will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes so when he gives the new heart and the cleansing that comes in the new covenant through christ he also says he'll put his spirit in us now that was not always the case the people of israel didn't have god's spirit in them for the most part i say for the most part because there were exceptions sometimes the judges had the spirit come upon them a few of them the kings when they were anointed with oil the spirit came upon them saul and david anyway the spirit came upon them that made them unusual moses had the spirit upon him um the prophets in general had the spirit the spirit come upon them and they prophesied that was typical now if you look back at numbers chapter 11 okay numbers uh 11 verse 29 well this is the tale end of a story moses complained to god that the burden of leadership was too great for him with that many people he was leading and they were a bunch of rebels so it was a pain in the neck and so god said well get 70 of the elders bring them to the tabernacle door and i'll take the spirit that's on you i'll put it on them too and then they will share the burden of leadership notice the leaders had to be spirit filled so they took these 70 elders who did not have the spirit on them like everyone else did not except moses and then god poured his spirit on them and they prophesied which is typical of what happened in the old testament so one would have the spirit come upon them now it turns out that only 68 of those 70 men were there at the tabernacle door two of them who were on the list didn't show up they were still in the camp and uh not at the tabernacle door and they the spirit came on them and they began to prophesy too and a man learned of this and came running to moses and said they're eldad and midad they're prophesying in the camp and joshua said moses forbid them why well perhaps joshua thought you know if they're out prophesying without moses oversight they could become competitors they could be rebels they could leave people after themselves they're prophets too now you know this was supposed to take place under moses oversight and these guys were kind of out on their own doing it and so joshua said forbid them moses and moses said this in verse 29 are you jealous for my sake oh that the lord's people were prophets i'm sorry oh that all the lord's people were prophets and that the lord would put his spirit upon them now in the old testament this never happened there never was a time when all the lord's people were prophets and he put his spirit upon them but joel said after this i will pour my spirit on all flesh and they will prophesy in other words the thing that moses wished would happen was actually in god's plan to

happen but not immediately not in the old testament era the new testament would be the era of the spirit that's when the air the age of the spirit when god brought his spirit on all his people joel predicted it it's the same thing that isaiah spoke of when god pours out his spirit and turns the wilderness into a fruitful field it's also when ezekiel said that god would take out the heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh and and and put his spirit in his people also in ezekiel this is an important passage in ezekiel chapter 37 that's the prophecy of the dry bones and the dry bones represented israel in babylon they said our bones are dried our hope is lost their country was destroyed they'd been you know captive in babylon for decades and they were discouraged they figured there's no hope of the nation ever been restored but god showed ezekiel the vision of these dried up bones rattling moving taking shape assembling and becoming skeletons and then muscle and flesh and skin and hair as he watched it was like a reconstruction of a human being that had decayed to the point of dry bones but now it's like play the tape in reverse and now they're complete humans with skin and and hair but it says but there's no breath in them no spirit in them and so god told ezekiel prophesy to the spirit and he did and the spirit came into these these uh bodies and when god explains this he says this in ezekiel 37 12 therefore prophesy and say to them thus says the lord god behold all my people i will open the graves your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you to the land of israel now this is not literally talking about the resurrection of the last day this is talking about the fact that they were in babylon and they were like dry bones there but he was going to reassemble them he's going to bring them back under the rubble make them into a people again a nation again you know build jerusalem again build the temple again they don't all be assembled but there'd still be no spirit in them in others the return of the exiles from babylon would not be the age of the spirit that's the first step the second step would be when he pours out his spirit on them and that happened 500 years later at pentecost there's two stages to this restoration that ezekiel sees because he goes on to say in verse 13 then you shall know that i am the lord when i have opened your graves oh my people and brought you uh brought you up from your graves i will put my spirit in you and you shall live now first i'm going to assemble you reassemble you from the scattered in the wilderness scattered you know in babel and dry bones i'm going to put you back together again as a people in your land and then i'm going to put my spirit on you that didn't happen immediately but it did happen at pentecost so there's two aspects of restoration given to the promise to the babel the captives in babel they'd be reassembled and then they'd have the spirit poured out the age of the spirit would come now what's interesting is when you look at ezekiel 47 and verse 1 you'll see something that looks very familiar to us because we just read something interesting in joel chapter 8 chapter 3 and verse 18 and in ezekiel 47 1 he says then he brought me back to the door of the temple and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east for the front of the temple faced east and the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple south of the altar he brought me out by way of the north gate and as you read down further several verses it becomes a great river this river flowing out from the house of

the lord to the east that's exactly what joel said in joel chapter 3 in verse 18 a fountain shall flow from the house of the lord and water the valley of the acacias which is to the east on the east side of jordan twice the prophets have seen this river flowing from jerusalem out to the world what is that river if you look also at zechariah which is almost at the end of the new testament zechariah 14 and verse 8 it says in that day it shall be that living waters will flow from jerusalem half of them toward the eastern sea half of them toward the western sea in both summer and winter it shall occur and so rivers well there's a living water flowing from jerusalem ezeziel saw it as a river flowing out of the temple joel described as a water for example it's a river of living waters now only zechariah mentions the term living waters the others just mentioned waters but zechariah tells us these are living waters but now look at what jesus said in john chapter 7 in john 7 verse 37 through verse 39 it says on that day the great day of the feast jesus stood up and cried out saying if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink he who believes in me as the scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water now by the way he said i'm just telling you it's what the scripture said the only scripture he could mean is the old testament there was no other scripture there's no new testament so he's talking about the old like the old testament scriptures say living waters will flow rivers of living water will flow only the scriptures in the old testament say they'll flow out of jerusalem jesus said they'll flow out of the believers but you find in the new testament that the believers community is referred to as the new jerusalem is referred to as jerusalem in the new testament and but look at the next verse in john 7 verse 39 this he spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing in him would receive for this holy spirit was not yet given because jesus was not yet glorified so even though god had brought the captives back from babylon like the bones assembling into people again the spirit was not yet given which god promised in ezeziel would happen because jesus was not yet glorified so there's this gap from the return of the exiles from babylon in 539 bc to the time of christ and pentecost in 30 a.d. that long gap was the gap between the first part and the second part of ezeziel's prophecy of restoration and john tells us here the second part had not happened the spirit was not yet given because jesus was not yet glorified but when jesus spoke about living waters flowing out of believers this was talking about that which means the living waters the rivers of the water flowing out of jerusalem in the old testament prophet and from the house of the lord we're the house of the lord we're we're living stones built into a spiritual house of god we're built on the foundation of apostles and prophets assembled into a habitation of god the church is the house of the lord the church is the new jerusalem it's from the church out of the believers shall flow living waters and that's john said is the holy spirit let me just show you hebrews real quick chapter 12 so we understand how the new testament understood new testament rogers understood these concepts in hebrews chapter 12 verse 22 and 23 the writer says but you have come he's talking to the believing readers you have come to mount zion to the city of the living god the heavenly jerusalem to the innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven the church is the heavenly jerusalem it is

mount zion in the new testament era so out of jerusalem out of mount zion flows the holy spirit to to minister to the world the the ministry of the spirit through the church is like pictured like a river of water pouring out so when joel talks about the uh you know i'll pour out my spirit on all flesh he's simply agreeing with ezekiel he's agreeing with isaiah he's agreeing with you know zechariah and and joel also sees this river going out watering it's not a literal river of water it doesn't act like literal water it's a spiritual phenomenon this is poetry in joel and most of the prophets so that it's kind of mistaken to try to apply it in some way to a literal river to take these passages in poetry and prophecy literally is to miss their point and especially to miss what the new testament said about them and since some of what's in the new testament is jesus own words like those in read or the writer of hebrews like hebrews 12 we saw we can see that these are inspired interpretations if we take a different interpretation than jesus did and then paul did and then the writer of hebrews did and then peter did um well we're putting our own opinion which certainly cannot be inspired if it's contrary to the inspired opinion of the apostles and jesus you see we have a choice we can believe what jesus said or we can believe what our opinion is and to me that's a no-brainer there's no contest there so i would say that as we read this part of joel we're talking about the day of pentecost the outflowing of the holy spirit the fulfillment of what the scriptures said in other places and what joel continues to say and as far as the judgment and what he refers to in verse 31 joel 2 31 is uh the coming of the great and terrible day of the that great and terrible day of the lord is the destruction of jerusalem in 80 70 in my opinion and the point out of the spirit was the beginning of that era but it was the last days of the temple era which is why every new testament writer and they all wrote before 70 a.d they all said they were living in the last days the writer of hebrews opens by saying god who at sundry times and diverse manner spoke to our fathers through the prophets has spoken in these last days through his son paul said that the things that happen to israel happen as types for us who are living at the ends of the ages peter begins his sermon on in acts 2 this is what joel said would happen in the last days well all the new testament writers agreed they were living in the last days in first john chapter 2 john says little children it is the last hour and as you've heard that antichrist shall come even now many antichrists have come whereby we know it's the last hour in james chapter 5 james rebukes the richman says you've laid up treasures in the last days the last days the last hour the the final hour this this is when they were living they were living the end of the old testament era it was a transitional time the writer of hebrews said the old testament was about to vanish away but it had been inaugurated 40 years before it vanished away by jesus in the upper room when he introduced the new covenant with his disciples at the last supper and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood so the new covenant came and the old covenant faded away over a period of a generation and fell apart completely in 80 70 that's the that's the transition the prophets told about the judgment on jerusalem apostate and the salvation of the remnant now this is a very important thing um my recent books about the kingdom of god have a lot of reviews on amazon and only one of them is really unhappy with it there's about 60 something five star reviews and then

there's a one star review at amazon and um the the title of the one-star review says replacement theologians are ignorant of the history of israel and then the comment was trash that's that's the evaluation of my books now it's interesting because my books are not about eschatology but they're about the kingdom of god and certainly i do i do take the so-called replacement theology view but people who are against replacement theology don't understand what they're against if you ask them what does replacement theology refer to they'll say well it means you believe that the church has replaced israel now first of all why would that be objectionable well because they think of the church as less than israel of course and they also think of the church in institutional terms i've heard dispensations say many times all those those replacement theology people they want all the blessings of israel to come on the church but none of the curses as if that's kind of a red flag why how do they think they could have the blessings not the curses well wake up there's like a theme in scripture the wicked get curses and the righteous get blessings not curses you're right the true church which is made up of the true followers of jesus of whom he is their head and they walk in his spirit they do things that are righteous they don't they don't bring the curse upon themselves paul said the fruit of the spirit is all these things they says against this there's no law yeah you see if you think of the institutional church you're thinking about like the medieval roman catholic church and and some of the dead liberal denominations say yeah they can they can come under the curse they're not the church they're man-made organizations in the bible the church is made up of the true members of the body of christ and they aren't doing the things that brought a curse on israel they're doing the things that god said they should do now they are what's called the remnant i would much rather refer to my theology as remnant theology than replacement theology because there's no real replacement you see paul described it as an olive tree israel's an olive tree it has natural branches on it which are the jewish people ethnic but he says some of those natural branches been lopped they're broken off because they didn't believe in christ so they're not part of a faithful remnant that leaves on the tree the branches the natural branches that are faithful the jewish people who believed in christ they're still part of israel they're still on the tree but among them paul says gentile branches like branches from a while a trip and grafted in now the tree has jewish and gentile branches and what they all have in common is they believe in the messiah they're faithful it's the faithful jewish remnant that is saved and those who are not faithful have been cut off the tree they're not even israeli they're not connected to god in any way they're just like pagans now the tree wasn't replaced the demographics of the tree have somewhat been shifted so that you know some of the ethnic jewish people are not on the tree and even dispensations will agree with that judas iscariot was ethnically jewish um karl marx was ethnically jewish sigmund freud was ethnically jewish atheist and anti-god but ethnically jewish lots of ethnically jewish people are not god's people they're not part of the tree they don't believe they are natural branches but they've been cut off because they're unbeliever gentiles have been added but gentiles haven't replaced the tree gentiles have been added to the remnant that was already on the tree the disciples of jesus were jewish

they're the jewish faithful remnant anyone who is a faithful jew would follow the messiah any jew who rejected the messiah was not a faithful jew so paul says in romans chapter 9 and verse 27 he says isaiah also cries out concerning israel though the number of the children of israel be as the sand of the sea the remnant will be saved now the children of israel may be innumerable millions but only the remnant will be saved not all israel not all the jews the faithful remnant will be saved this is a common teaching of the old testament as well later in chapter 11 of romans romans 11 5 he said even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace he is a remnant of jews who are still saved because when jesus came they transitioned from being under mooses to being under messiah and they are saved the jews that did not receive messiah are broken off like and he goes on throughout that chapter talking about the olive tree the olive tree was not replaced by another olive tree but some branches were removed and replaced by new branches that's not the same thing as replacement it's more like the remnant survived that lopping off that pruning the remnant stayed on the tree the others were removed and we who are gentiles have simply been able to join with that remnant to be part of that same tree with them which is israel that was true in the old testament too by the way in the old testament a gentiles could join and become part of israel too they could get circumcised they could keep sabbath they could keep passover they could live like a jew and they could be a jew they could be part of israel there never was a time when gentiles couldn't be part of israel it's just that since jesus has come more gentiles than previously have become part of it and they have been added to the tree and some have been removed that's not replacement though you certainly have a different demographic you've got the faithful remnant of israel and then the gentiles are added which is what the prophets all said would happen paul himself quoted isaiah uh what what where did isaiah say that what did he say look at isaiah chapter 10 this is what paul's quoting isaiah chapter 10 verse um 20 through 22 it should come to pass in that day that the remnant of israel and such as have escaped from the house of jacob will never again depend upon him who defeated them but will depend on the lord the holy one of israel in truth the remnant will return the remnant of jacob to the mighty god for though your people oh israel be as the sand of the sea yet a remnant of them will return now paul quoted it a remnant shall be saved isaiah said a remnant shall return why did paul change that to be saved well who are they returning to look at the end of verse 21 they shall return to the mighty god this statement this phrase the mighty god is found only one other place in scripture do you know where in the previous chapter of isaiah in a passage says unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder his name should be called wonderful counselor the mighty god the everlasting father the prince of peace these ones who are coming they're coming to christ the remnant will come to christ the rest will not the majority of israel in jesus day and to this day were apostate unbelievers but the remnant has always come to christ from the time of jesus when the apostles were the first members of the remnant to come to christ then 3 000 on the day of pentecost who came to christ jews uh and and forever after any jew who comes to christ is part of that remnant and that is

who's saved not the other jews just the ones who come to christ the mighty god now that's what joel says in the passage we're reading in joel chapter 2 verse 32 he says it should come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved now that's not future paul actually quotes that verse in romans to to say that's how we're saved whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved romans 10 13 he quotes joel as the present means by which people are saved by calling on christ the lord and that being so paul sees joel's you know the era that joel's heart is now he quotes joel's statement about that era and saying it's true now this is it but more than that read further into verse 32 for in mount zion remember that's that's now the church in jerusalem there shall be deliverance as the lord has said among the remnant whom the lord calls oh the remnant the remnant will be saved but the spirit is poured out on the remnant and that's the faithful jews who received christ and were in pentecost when the spirit was poured out god brought salvation and poured out the spirit on the remnant so this is okay we need to move along because we only have a few minutes left chapter three is quite difficult in that it uses a lot of terms that are not used anywhere else in scripture and that are ambiguous but i'll read it i'll tell you what i think it's saying okay for behold in those days now we're talking about the days when the spirit was poured out so we're talking about the present era we're not talking about some future last days things we're talking about in those days that the spirit is poured out and that um you know whoever calls on the name of the lord should be saved that's this time that's our present time for behold in those days and at that time he states it quite to make sure twice to make sure we know he's not talking about some other time in those days at that time when i bring back the captives of judah and jerusalem i will also gather all nations to bring them down to the valley of josephat and i will enter into judgment with them there on account of my people my heritage israel whom they have scattered among the nations they shall also be divided also they have also divided up my land they have cast lots for my people they've given a boy in exchange for a harlot and sold a girl for wine that they may drink so they're involved in human trafficking now he says when he brings back the captives of judah that sounds like it's talking about like uh the diaspora coming back to jerusalem because he says when i bring back the captives well this is another case where we need to understand how the bible uses this phrase it's used many times i can show you several of them most most times it has nothing to do with captives coming back from anywhere for example in uh job chapter 42 at the end of the story of job in verse 10 it says literally in the hebrew the lord turned again the captivity of job when he prayed for his friends turned again the captivity job he never went into captivity modern translations are say the lord restored the fortunes of job when he prayed for because that's what the phrase actually means strange that it mentions captives but it means restored the fortunes it's generic now there are times when god does bring back captives and the phrase can be used that way too but there are lots of places where it doesn't let me just show you some of them um for example in the psalms do i have those in my notes i hope so oh i have them in my margin so i can find them there i i looked up a bunch of these where the where the actual hebrew says god turned the captivity that's

what it actually says in this passage also in joel 3-1 although it's translated differently here uh but in psalm 14 7 psalm 14 7 this is a psalm of david which means it was written long before any jews were in captivity it was hundreds of years after david's time that the jews went into captivity there were no captives uh that had to be brought back in david's time and yet in chapter 14 verse 7 of psalm says oh that the salvation of israel would come out of zion when the lord turns the captivity of his people let jacob rejoice and israel be glad and there's almost a repetition of the same verse in another song also by david psalm 53 and verse 6 this is also one of david's psalms um 53 6 oh that the salvation of israel would come out of zion when the lord turns the captivity in the hebrew of his people let jacob rejoice now david's looking forward to god restoring the fortunes of israel apparently they've gone through some hard times but they've not gone into captivity the phrase that he uses turns the captivity is the same thing as he's using joe 40 42 10 god turned the captivity of joe it just means he restored his fortunes to what they were before there's no literal captivity being talked about there's no literal movement from one geographical area to another like returning it's a it's a hebrewism and it's also found in psalm 126 verse 1 used the same way uh hosea 6 11 and uh and zephaniah 3 20 those are some of the places that use this phrase where it's not talking about any captives at all it's just talking about people who've been in trouble and god gets them out of trouble that's turning the captivity of them now i don't i you know i don't know why that phrase is used that way it doesn't sound like it should be but i'm not writing the bible i'm simply here to understand it and to recognize how they talk so when joel 3 1 says what i bring when i turn the captivity of judan just when i restore the fortunes of them and it's the remnants that is restoring the fortunes of which is of course the followers of christ god has brought judgment on israel and now he to the remnant who are followers of christ he restores blessing he also gathers all the nations apparently for judgment the valley of joseph does not mention elsewhere in scripture except later in this passage and uh there is no place known called the valley of joseph there was a king of judah named joseph but it doesn't seem to refer to him either because he didn't have a valley but i think the name the meaning of the name is what's referred to joseph is a name that means yahweh has judged and so this is the valley of judgment it is also referred to later in joel in verse 12 as the valley of joseph but then in verse 14 is referred to as the valley of decision now it's obvious this is figurative there's no valley by that name there's a valley by definition valley has two mountains on one on either side it's a place where you're between two options you're going to go on that mountain or that mountain uh you want to come to mount zion the heavenly jerusalem the church of the living god that's one mountain there's also mount sinai and so and people in the valley of decision are standing with making a choice between those two things to go the apostate jewish way or to go the messiah's and this is the valley of judgment this is where god judges this is where i don't mean i don't think it means in the sense of the ultimate judgment at the last day but rather god is dividing and judging and discriminating between people who choose one way or another out of that valley they're in the valley and in that valley it's the valley where decisions are being made apparently between one

mountain and another and uh by the way when israel came into canaan god told them uh half of the tribes stand on mount ebel and half of them on mount gerizim and one of the mountains he pronounced curses on the other mountain he pronounced blessings on so it is there may be some kind of reference back to that idea there's the priest stood in the valley between there and pronounce these curses so the valley of decision might figuratively mean standing between the place of being of receiving god's curses or the other option receiving his blessings this is the place that all of us stand in this time all people stand in that position in this age of the spirit in this age of the messiah it's a place where you can still make a decision this age will end and then people won't be making those decisions anymore when jesus comes back he judges all and sends them to their destiny but until he does that we're in the valley of decision everyone is and so god brings all nations into that place why because he sends the church out to preach the gospel to all nations and that gives all nations an opportunity to decide a decision they didn't have any possibility of making before they heard the gospel but now the gospel has been preached and is being preached and that places all nations in the position of having to decide which way out of that valley they're going it says um down to verse four indeed what have i do to you uh excuse me what have you to do to do with me oh tyrant sidon and all the coasts of philistia will you retaliate against me but if you retaliate against me swiftly and speedily i will return your retaliation upon your own head because you have taken my silver and my gold and have carried it into your temples my prized possessions also the people of judah and the people of jerusalem you have sold to the greeks that you may remove them far from their borders behold i will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them i will return your retaliation on your own head i will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of judah and they shall set them sell them to the sabians to a people far off for the lord has spoken now this is an example of of a tendency for the prophets to make generic statements about the enemies of god and and identify them by the names of specific enemies of israel in this case tyrant sidon uh the philistines the sabians uh these were ancient enemies of israel but they don't all even exist anymore tyers hardly in existence anymore philistines are an extinct race uh this cannot be something that literally applies to this literal group of people in some future time because some of them don't exist anymore they the philistines didn't even exist in the time of christ they're that you know they're that old so quite a few prophets do this isaiah has some passages like this um i believe that uh ezekeil does and there are some others that the prophets are making a prophecy about some future era from their time when god's enemies will be defeated and their oppression of his people will be ended and that's what this is talking about but they use the names of enemies that were their enemies in that time to represent enemies of god's people in general and that's the only way we can understand some of these because whether you think they're fulfilled at the first coming of christ or at the second there there aren't philistines at either of those two times there aren't moabites and edomites which are mentioned in some similar passages uh at you know those people don't exist anymore they didn't exist really at the time of christ at his first coming and

they certainly won't exist at his second coming so the only thing we can say is these people represent enemies of the people of god and the idea here is that god of course delivers his people from enemies he gives his people victory and freedom uh from and our real enemies of course are demonic our real enemies are not flesh and blood we don't wrestle against flesh and blood we wrestle against demonic powers paul said and there's many references to that fact in different ways in the bible proclaim this among the nations prepare for war wake up the mighty men let all the men of war draw near let them come up beat their plowshares into swords and their your pruning hooks into spheres let the weak say i'm strong assemble and come up all you nations and gather together all around cause your mighty ones to go down there oh lord now who are these people being called to war is it israel is it god's people or is it the nations it seems to be calling out to the nations verse 11 assemble and come all you nations and these are the ones who aren't they're in the valley of decision they're not necessarily on god's side it's as if it's saying he's just said that the enemies of god's people he's going to retaliate against them he's going to deliver his people from them and it may be as if he's kind of taunting them saying go ahead you weak ones say you're strong get all the weapons you can turn your farming implements into weapons bring all the will all the you know military power you can against me just see how that works out for you you want to fight me come on bring all you've got now this statement turn your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears obviously is a parody of isaiah chapter 2 and micah 4 both of which speak of the in the messianic age that the people who are instructed by god will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks they will give up on war and uh their their method of spreading the kingdom will not be by warfare but by cultivation jesus always spoke about the kingdom spread by sowing seeds you know like a sower so seeds it's cultivating its plowshares pruning hooks farming implements they'll be using not war instruments but here taking that same imagery it reverses it and says and i think this is addressing the hostile nations saying go ahead you know turn all your farming instruments into weapons if you want to you if you're weak say you're strong encourage yourself come on down and but i my mighty ones are going to be here to meet you you know and the mighty ones could even refer to the angels it's hard to know could be his people who are spiritually mighty because daniel said those who know their god shall be strong and do exploits it could be godly spiritually strong people so he says let the nations be wakened and come up to the valley of josephat for there i will sit to judge all the surrounding nations put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe come on down no come go down for the wine press is full the vats overflow for their wickedness is great interestingly this very a statement put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe is quoted in revelation 14 verse 18 where jesus has the sickle and he an angel says to him put in your sickle for the grapes are ripe and that's when the grapes are thrown into the wine vat and trampled and the blood comes out into the valley and flows to the horse's bridles that's that's what it says in revelation but this it's the i the idea seems to be from here put in the sickle the harvest is ripe go down for the wine press is full the vats overflow for the wickedness is great uh multitudes multitudes

in the valley of decision for the day of the lord is near in the valley of decision the sun and moon will grow dark and the stars will diminish their brightness now i suspect that this is speaking of the early part of the age that was begun at pentecost when uh you know the uh the harvest and the wine press and the wickedness being trampled and the day of the lord this is in my opinion a reference to the judgment that came on jerusalem because frankly in revelation 14:18 when it quotes it i believe the passage suggests it's about the judgment of jerusalem also in the context so i think that this day of the lord is the day of judgment on jerusalem in a.d 70 and of course it was the jews first who were in the valley of decision when jesus came and the gospel was first preached in jerusalem they had to decide we go with the messiah we go in with the old ways we go in with the mountain of curse or the mountain of blessing and um so they were in the valley of decision but but it makes very clear all the nations are going to be in this position to have to make such a decision as well but it says the lord also will roar from zion and utter his voice from jerusalem the heavens and the earth will shake but the lord will be a shelter for his people the heavens they are shaking is something that haggai chapter 2 verse talks about god said behold i'll shake not only the earth but also the heavens and this is quoted by the writer of hebrews in anticipating the destruction of jerusalem in his day he wrote the book of hebrews just before jerusalem was destroyed and he says he said it is a little while before this prophecy comes true i will shake all things and so forth and then he says but we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken that is the jewish system was shaken down and the kingdom of the messiah which the remnant had entered was not shaken down it can't be shaken it can't be destroyed so and it seems like both uh and it sounds like joel saying the heavens and earth will shake is saying the same thing that haggai saying in haggai 2 verses 6 and 7 and which is quoted in hebrews 12:26 as being about the end of the old covenant era and the the survival of the new the kingdom of the remnant he says um verse 17 so you shall know that i am the dwelling in zion my holy mountain then jerusalem shall be holy and no alien shall ever pass through it again now we're talking about the new jerusalem here we're talking about the church we're talking about the church of uh you know the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven that's the jerusalem that's here um it says and it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine the hills will flow with milk all the brooks of judah shall be flooded with water a fountain shall flow from the house of the lord and water from the valley of the occasion so we already saw how john 7:39 tells us that's about the holy spirit poured out as at pentecost egypt shall be a desolation edom a desolate wilderness because of violence against the people of judah for they have shed innocent blood in their land but judah shall abide forever and jerusalem from generation to generation for i will quit them i will acquit them of blood guilt whom i had not acquitted for the lord dwells in zion now where the lord dwells is in his people which are the christians we are the temple of the holy spirit again in the age of the holy spirit god dwells by his spirit in his temple which is his people and so zion the way i understand it in the first half of joel zion is earthly zion earthly jerusalem because that's where the locusts were were bought you know that's

where the locusts were plaguing but once the holy spirit's poured out i believe zion refers to and jerusalem refers to a spiritual zion because we're now in the spiritual era and uh the holy spirit being poured out the river of living water going out from the house of the lord this all is a picture of the holy spirit being given to god's people the remnant who then of course minister to the world uh the dry and fruitless world becomes a fruitful field as the the gospel message is brought in the power of the holy spirit so this is the book of joel i warned you in advance the latter part of it of course is understood somewhat differently by people in different camps i gave you some of the reasons i have for saying it the way i do suffice it to say that the way i understand it is the way the church generally understood it for most of 1800 years there may have been a few people here and there who saw it differently but they didn't write things you know the church had this view that this is a spiritual description of what happened since pentecost until this present time until jesus returns and while of course if someone can make better scriptural arguments for the newer view they're welcome to make them but that there are two views and so i wanted to make sure you knew both especially the one that i think is right