

The Books of Hosea, Joel, and Amos, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All Flesh

Joel 2:18–3:21

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson carries the doctrinal heart of the entire study, because Joel 2:28–32 is one of the most directly fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament, and the New Testament tells us exactly how. The teacher must establish without ambiguity that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16). The outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh was fulfilled when the church was born, inaugurating the gospel age. It is therefore not a future event still awaited, and it is not a warrant for a modern charismatic or sign-gift movement that detaches the Spirit's outpouring from its fulfillment in the establishment of the Lord's church. Guard the class firmly against both errors.

Equally vital is the right handling of Joel 2:32, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. The teacher must show that Peter, preaching this very text, does not invite the crowd to pray a private sinner's prayer or to believe only. When the convicted hearers cry out, what shall we do, Peter answers, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). To call on the name of the Lord is to obey the gospel, an obedient, confessing faith that includes repentance and baptism, as Paul also teaches in Romans 10. This is the church-of-Christ conviction, drawn straight from the apostolic example.

The formation aim is to move students from spectators to participants. Joel ends with God dwelling in Zion and waters flowing from His house. The teacher should leave students longing to take their place among those whom the Lord calls, to come out of the valley of decision into settled obedience, and to live as people whose ruined years have been restored by a gracious God who poured out His Spirit and made His dwelling among us in Christ and His church.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Joel 2:18–27 God reverses the judgment and promises restoration, climaxing in the words, I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten (2:25). What does this passage reveal about the character of God toward those who genuinely repent, and why is this restoration a work of grace rather than something earned?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The hinge of the entire book falls at 2:18. Then the Lord became jealous for His land and had pity on His people. The Hebrew verbs can be read as the response that follows the repentance commanded in the previous verses. The people returned, and God turned. His jealousy here is

not petty resentment but the fierce, protective love of a husband for his bride, the covenant zeal that will not abandon His own.

God answers with a flood of promises. Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied. I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. He will remove the northern army, drive it into a parched and desolate land, and deal wondrously with His people. The very losses catalogued in chapter 1, the grain, the wine, the oil, the joy, are restored one by one.

Notice the order. Repentance came first, then restoration. But the restoration is not wages earned by the quality of the people's sorrow. It is the overflow of God's character, His pity, His jealousy for His people, His delight in showing mercy. Genuine repentance does not purchase grace; it positions the heart to receive what grace freely gives.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's response to genuine repentance reveals His character as merciful, protective, and eager to restore.
- The very items lost in chapter 1 are restored, showing God's restoration is specific and complete.
- Restoration follows repentance but is not earned by it; it is the overflow of grace, not a wage.
- God's jealousy is covenant love, not petty resentment; He will not abandon His own people.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the Lord became jealous for His land and had pity on His people?
- How does this passage show that restoration is grace and not something earned?
- Where do you need to trust that God's mercy is greater than your failure?

Question 2

Student Question:

God promises that His people shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall never again be put to shame (Joel 2:26-27). Where have you been living in shame or scarcity of soul, and what would it mean to trust the God who satisfies and restores?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At the center of the restoration stands a sentence that has comforted God's people for ages. I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the swarming locust, the hopper, the destroyer, my great army which I sent among you. God takes responsibility for the judgment, my great army which I sent, and then promises to undo its long-term damage. He can give back not merely a harvest but the years.

This is a staggering promise. Lost time seems irrecoverable. The years the locusts ate are gone, the wasted seasons, the squandered chances. Yet God promises restoration that reaches even into the past, redeeming what looked permanently lost. He does not always rewind the calendar, but He can make the lost years yield fruit again, weaving even our wasted seasons into His purpose.

The promised result is rich relationship. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. The deepest restoration is not full barns but the assurance of God's presence and the end of shame.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God takes responsibility for the judgment, calling the locusts my great army, while still offering restoration.
- God can restore even lost years, redeeming wasted time for those who return to Him.
- The goal of restoration is relationship and the knowledge of God's presence, not merely material plenty.
- Never again be put to shame points to the security found in God's nearness, fulfilled finally in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is I will restore the years the locust has eaten such a precious promise?
- What does it mean that the deepest restoration is God's presence rather than full barns?
- What lost or wasted years do you long for God to redeem?

Question 3

Student Question:

Joel 2:28-29 promises, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. According to Acts 2:16-21, when and how was this promise fulfilled, and why must we say it was fulfilled at Pentecost rather than reserved for a future age?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the prophecy lifts to its summit. And it 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. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out My Spirit. The God who poured out judgment now promises to pour out His Spirit, and to do so on all flesh, not on a select few.

Under the old covenant the Spirit came on particular people for particular tasks, prophets, judges, kings, craftsmen. Joel foresees a day when the Spirit would be poured out broadly, across the lines of gender, age, and social class. Sons and daughters, old and young, servant and free, all would share in the new age of the Spirit.

We must let the New Testament tell us when this came to pass, and it does so with perfect clarity. The next note will take up Acts 2 directly. For now we mark the word afterward and the breadth of the promise. Something new and decisive was coming, an age of the Spirit that would touch every kind of person, the hallmark of the gospel age and the Lord's church.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Under the old covenant the Spirit came on select individuals; Joel foresees an outpouring on all flesh.
- The breadth of the promise, crossing age, gender, and class, marks the inclusive character of the gospel age.
- The word afterward signals a decisive new era, which the New Testament identifies as the age of the church.
- We must let the New Testament, not speculation, define when and how this promise was fulfilled.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the outpouring on all flesh differ from how the Spirit worked under the old covenant?
- What does the breadth of this promise suggest about who belongs in the people of God?
- Why must we let the New Testament tell us when this prophecy was fulfilled?

Question 4

Student Question:

Joel says the outpouring would reach sons and daughters, old and young, menservants and maidservants (Joel 2:28–29). How does the breadth of this promise, reaching every kind of person, shape the way you view your own place and the place of others in the body of Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here we reach the doctrinal core of the lesson, and it must be stated plainly. On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection, the Spirit was poured out on the apostles, they spoke in other tongues, and a crowd gathered in confusion. Peter stood up and explained, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and he quoted Joel 2:28–32 in full (Acts 2:16–21). The apostle, speaking by inspiration, declared that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled before their eyes on that very day.

This settles the interpretation. The outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh was fulfilled at Pentecost, when the church was established and the gospel age began. It is not a future event still awaited at the end of time. Peter said this is that, not this points to something thousands of years away. The last days that Peter speaks of are the gospel age, the age inaugurated at Pentecost in which we still live.

We must therefore guard against two errors. First, the error that postpones Joel's outpouring to a future dispensation, a coming kingdom age, robbing Pentecost of its fulfillment. Second, the error of a modern charismatic or sign-gift movement that detaches the promise from its purpose. The miraculous outpouring confirmed the word and birthed the church (Hebrews 2:3-4); it was never meant to launch a perpetual quest for private spiritual experiences. The promise was fulfilled in the establishment of the Lord's church, and the Spirit dwells in His people now according to the apostolic pattern.

Far from diminishing the passage, this fulfillment magnifies it. Joel stood centuries before Christ and saw the day the church would be born, the day God would pour out His Spirit and gather sons and daughters from every nation. When we read Joel 2:28-29, we are reading the birth announcement of the church we belong to.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Acts 2:16-21 is decisive: Peter says Joel's prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.
- The outpouring on all flesh inaugurated the gospel age and the Lord's church; it is not a future event.
- Peter's last days refers to the church age that began at Pentecost, the age in which we now live.
- Reject the dispensational error that postpones Joel's outpouring to a future kingdom age.
- Reject the charismatic error that detaches the outpouring from its purpose; the miraculous confirmed the gospel and birthed the church (Hebrews 2:3-4).
- Joel 2:28-29 is, in effect, the birth announcement of the church to which Christians belong.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Peter's statement, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, settle the interpretation?
- Why must we reject both the dispensational and the charismatic misreadings of this passage?
- How does it change your reading of Joel to see it as the birth announcement of the church?

Question 5

Student Question:

Joel 2:30–31 speaks of wonders in the heavens, the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome Day of the Lord. How does Peter’s use of this language in Acts 2 help us understand such apocalyptic imagery in the prophets, and guard us from reading it as a literal end-times timetable?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joel 2:30–31 continues, and I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. This is the language of cosmic upheaval, sun darkened, moon like blood, signs in the sky, the kind of imagery the prophets use for momentous divine acts.

Peter quotes these very verses at Pentecost as part of what was being fulfilled. This teaches us how to read such apocalyptic language. It is the prophets’ vivid way of describing world-shaking acts of God, not a literal astronomical timetable to be charted. The cross, the resurrection, the birth of the church, and ultimately the final judgment are world-altering events worthy of such cosmic language.

This guards us from a common mistake, treating every mention of darkened suns and blood-red moons as a coded forecast of literal end-times astronomy. Peter’s use of Joel anchors the imagery in the redemptive events of the gospel age, culminating in the final Day of the Lord. The point of the imagery is the seriousness and certainty of God’s visitation, not a chart of future eclipses.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Cosmic imagery, sun darkened and moon turned to blood, is the prophets’ vivid language for world-shaking divine acts.
- Peter applies this imagery at Pentecost, anchoring it in the redemptive events of the gospel age.
- We should not read such language as a literal astronomical timetable of the end times.
- The imagery underscores the seriousness and certainty of God’s visitation, climaxing in the final Day of the Lord.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Peter’s use of Joel 2:30–31 teach us to read apocalyptic imagery?
- Why is it a mistake to treat darkened suns and blood moons as a literal end-times forecast?
- What does the cosmic language tell us about the weight and certainty of God’s acts?

Question 6

Student Question:

Joel 2:32 says that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, and that in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, among the survivors whom the Lord calls. Have you taken your place among those the Lord calls, and what assurance does this verse offer you in an uncertain world?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joel 2:32 crowns the outpouring with a promise of salvation. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. The age of the Spirit is also the age of salvation, open to everyone who calls on the Lord.

We must understand calling on the name of the Lord correctly, for this is one of the most important phrases in the passage. Peter quotes it at Pentecost (Acts 2:21), and when his hearers are cut to the heart and ask what they must do, he does not tell them to pray a private prayer or merely to believe. He says, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). That is how the crowd called on the name of the Lord.

So calling on the name of the Lord is not a sinner's prayer whispered alone, and it is not faith only. It is obedient, confessing faith that turns from sin and submits to the Lord in baptism, exactly as Paul also teaches in Romans 10, where confessing with the mouth and believing in the heart lead to the same conclusion, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). To call on His name is to appeal to Him in trusting obedience to His revealed terms.

The next note will take up this doctrinal thread in full. Here we simply mark that Joel's great promise of salvation is fulfilled in the gospel, where God calls and people respond by obeying from the heart the pattern delivered to them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joel 2:32 promises salvation to everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, fulfilled in the gospel age.
- Peter quotes this verse at Pentecost and answers the convicted crowd with repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38).
- Calling on the name of the Lord is obedient, confessing faith, not a private sinner's prayer or faith only.
- Among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls shows salvation as God's gracious call met by obedient response.
- Romans 10:13 sets the same phrase in the context of confession, belief, and obedience to the gospel.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean, biblically, to call on the name of the Lord?
- How does Peter's answer in Acts 2:38 define calling on the Lord's name?
- Have you called on the Lord's name in the way the New Testament describes?

Question 7

Student Question:

Joel 3:1–16 describes God gathering the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment, with multitudes in the valley of decision. How should we understand this judgment of the nations, and why is it better read as God's final vindication of His people than as a literal geopolitical battle in a single earthly valley?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 3 turns to the judgment of the nations. For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment with them on behalf of My people. The name Jehoshaphat means the Lord judges, and the valley is best understood as a symbolic place of divine reckoning rather than a fixed point on a map.

God brings charges against the nations for how they treated His people, scattering them, dividing the land, selling boys and girls, plundering the temple. The God who disciplined His own people will also call the nations to account. He is the judge of all the earth, and no injustice against His people escapes His notice.

We should read this as God's assurance of final vindication for His people, not as a literal geopolitical battle staged in one earthly valley. The imagery of gathered nations and divine judgment runs throughout Scripture as a picture of God setting all things right. The prophet's point is comfort and warning, that God will judge the wicked and vindicate the faithful, a hope fulfilled in Christ's reign and consummated at the last day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Lord judges, is best read as a symbolic place of reckoning, not a fixed map location.
- God judges the nations for their treatment of His people; no injustice escapes His notice.
- This is God's assurance of final vindication, not a literal end-times battle in a single earthly valley.
- The passage offers both comfort to the faithful and warning to the wicked, fulfilled in Christ's reign and the final judgment.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of the name Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Lord judges?

- Why is this judgment of the nations better read as final vindication than as a literal battle?
- How does the certainty of God's judgment comfort and warn at the same time?

Question 8

Student Question:

Joel 3:14 speaks of multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, where the Day of the Lord is near. Where in your own life are you lingering in the valley of decision, and what is keeping you from a settled, obedient commitment to the Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At the center of the judgment scene stands a haunting image. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The word here can mean a valley of threshing or sharp judgment, but it has long spoken to readers of the great crowds who stand at the crossroads, the place where one's relationship to God is decided.

The harvest imagery presses in. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great. This is the language of decisive judgment, the moment when what has grown is gathered and what is ripe is reckoned. The Day of the Lord is near, and the multitudes stand in the valley where decision can no longer be postponed.

For us the image carries a personal weight. Multitudes still stand in the valley of decision, hesitating between commitment and delay, between obedience and drift. Joel's word is urgent. The Day of the Lord is near; the time for deciding is now. To linger in the valley of decision is itself a decision, and not a safe one. The call of the whole book is to come out of the valley and take one's place among those whom the Lord calls.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Multitudes in the valley of decision pictures crowds standing at the crossroads of their relationship to God.
- The harvest and winepress imagery conveys decisive, ripened judgment.
- To linger in the valley of decision is itself a decision, and a dangerous one.
- The nearness of the Day of the Lord lends urgency; the time to decide is now, not later.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the valley of decision picture, and why is delay itself a decision?
- How does the harvest imagery convey the seriousness of God's judgment?
- Where in your life are you lingering in the valley of decision?

Question 9

Student Question:

Acts 2 applies Joel's promise that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21) and climaxes in Peter's answer to the convicted crowd, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Drawing Joel, Acts 2, and Romans 10:13 together, what does it actually mean to call on the name of the Lord, and why is this obedient faith rather than a mere sinner's prayer or a charismatic sign-gift movement?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Having seen Joel from the locusts to Pentecost, we must draw together the doctrinal thread that runs through this lesson and crowns the study, the meaning of calling on the name of the Lord. Joel promises that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (2:32). The question is what that calling looks like, and Scripture answers with unusual clarity.

When Peter preaches Joel at Pentecost and quotes this very promise (Acts 2:21), the crowd is pierced to the heart and asks, brothers, what shall we do? If calling on the Lord were simply a silent prayer or a one-time act of faith only, this was the moment for Peter to say so. Instead he answers, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). That is the inspired definition of how these hearers called on the name of the Lord and were saved.

Paul confirms the same in Romans 10. He says if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, and then quotes Joel, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:9–13). Calling on the Lord is thus an obedient, confessing, repentant faith that submits to Him on His terms, not a private sinner's prayer and not faith only. Ananias told Saul, rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name (Acts 22:16), which ties the calling directly to baptism.

We must therefore reject two distortions. The first turns calling on the Lord into a sinner's prayer that supposedly saves apart from the obedience the apostles required. The second turns the outpoured Spirit into a charismatic, sign-seeking movement, when the New Testament shows the outpouring confirming the gospel and birthing the church. Joel's promise is gloriously fulfilled, but on the terms the apostles laid down. To call on the name of the Lord is to obey the gospel from the heart, repenting and being baptized into Christ, and so taking one's place among the saved, the church of the living God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joel 2:32 and Acts 2:21 promise salvation to those who call on the name of the Lord; Acts 2:38 defines how they called, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.
- Romans 10:9–13 sets calling on the Lord in the context of confession, belief, and obedience, not a private prayer.

- Acts 22:16, be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name, ties calling on the Lord directly to baptism.
- Reject the sinner's prayer and faith-only distortions; calling on the Lord is obedient, confessing faith.
- Reject the charismatic sign-gift distortion; the outpouring confirmed the gospel and established the church (Hebrews 2:3-4).
- To call on the name of the Lord is to obey the gospel and take one's place in the Lord's church.

Discussion Prompts

- How do Acts 2:38, Romans 10, and Acts 22:16 together define what it means to call on the name of the Lord?
- Why is this obedient faith rather than a sinner's prayer or a sign-gift movement?
- Have you called on the name of the Lord in the way the apostles taught, and how is that shaping your life?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Joel 2:18-3:21 as a whole, from the restored years to the outpoured Spirit to the God who dwells in Zion and waters His people from His house. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using this passage to form you right now, one way He is calling you to call on His name and live as one whose years He has restored.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joel ends not in judgment but in blessing and presence. But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water. A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim. The land once stripped bare by locusts now overflows with abundance that flows from God's own house.

This image of water flowing from God's house joins a great stream of biblical promise. Ezekiel saw a river from the temple, deepening as it went and bringing life wherever it flowed (Ezekiel 47). Zechariah saw living waters going out from Jerusalem. John saw the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the holy city (Revelation 22). Joel's fountain belongs to that family of promise, the life of God flowing out to refresh His people, fulfilled in the gospel and the church and consummated in the new creation.

The book closes with the words, the Lord dwells in Zion. After locusts, armies, trumpets, and the valley of decision, the final word is presence. God dwells with His people. This is the goal of the whole story of redemption, fulfilled in Christ, Immanuel, God with us, in the Spirit poured out on

the church, and finally in the new heavens and new earth where God dwells with His people forever.

So Joel ends where the Bible ends, with God among His people, the waters of life flowing, the years the locust ate not merely restored but swallowed up in everlasting joy. The summons of the whole book is to come out of the ruined field and the valley of decision and take our place in Zion, among the people in whose midst the Lord dwells.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joel ends with abundance flowing from God's house, reversing the barrenness of the locust plague.
- The fountain from the house of the Lord joins Ezekiel 47, Zechariah 14, and Revelation 22 as a picture of God's life flowing to His people.
- These promises are fulfilled in the gospel and the church and consummated in the new creation, not in a restored earthly temple system.
- The final word, the Lord dwells in Zion, names the goal of redemption, God present with His people in Christ and the church.
- The whole book summons us out of the valley of decision into Zion, where the Lord dwells among His people.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of the fountain flowing from the house of the Lord?
- How does Joel's ending connect to Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation, and where is it fulfilled?
- What does it mean that the final word of Joel is, the Lord dwells in Zion?