

## Joel 2:21-27

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/joel/joel-2/joel-221-27/>

*Joel summons the land, the wild animals, and the inhabitants of Zion to rejoice because the LORD will restore their blessings.*

Joel continues to explain how the LORD would reverse the curses placed upon Judah and restore their fortunes when the LORD becomes zealous for His land, and has pity on His people (vv. 18-20). This likely refers to the end of the age. Although there have been seasons in which Judah/Israel have prospered since the time of its exile, the restoration has been incomplete, and Israel's enemies have not been fully vanquished.

God addresses three entities within the nation: the field, the wild animals, and the inhabitants of Zion. After the land and people have been ravaged by invaders, Joel reassures them that God will have mercy on them and restore their blessings at a future time. This is because God's promises never fail (Romans 11:29). This appears to be spoken in anticipation of Judah's repentance.

First, Joel commanded the *land* and said, *Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad!* The *land* earlier "mourned" because the invaders had destroyed its vegetation, leaving it desolate and barren (Joel 1:10). The plague had caused *fear* and terror in the *land*. Here, however, the prophet commanded the *land* to replace its *fear* with rejoicing and gladness. The reason, he said, was that *the LORD has done great things*. This speaks of the *great things* the LORD will do to restore Israel in past tense, showing the certainty that God will restore Judah/Israel. In chapter 1, God used the same approach to show the certainty of His judgement.

The Suzerain God is "zealous for His land" (Joel 2:18). He will not let it stay desolate. He will reverse the ecological damage and allow the *land* of Judah to produce its fruits again. It is likely this prophesy has been fulfilled in part a number of times since the time of Joel. The most recent fulfillment was in the twentieth century, when Zionists returned to a land that was primarily either swampy or barren. The Jewish people have re-forested the land, tamed the Jordan River, and irrigated the desert. The ultimate fulfillment will likely come during the Millennial Kingdom, when Jesus sits on the throne of Israel, and dwells in the land.

Second, Joel addressed the wild animals, who live in the land: *Do not fear, beasts of the field!* Like the *land* of Judah, the *beasts of the field* were greatly affected. They were in distress because there was no "pasture for them" (Joel 1:18). The "water brooks" were dried up and "fire devoured the pastures of the wilderness" (Joel 1:20). Now the prophet exhorted them to have hope, because *the pastures of the wilderness have turned green*. This means fertility has returned to the land.

Green is the color of vegetative life. It connotes sustenance, beauty, and abundance (Psalm 23:2). More than any other color, *green* portrays nature in its ideal form. Throughout the Scriptures, *green* is used in a positive sense to represent abundance and fertility (Genesis 1:30; 9:3). Correspondingly, *green* is a sign of God's favor and provision. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that

the one who places his trust in the LORD “will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be *green*, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit” (Jeremiah 17:8).

In chapter 1, it seems God intended to send drought in addition to invasion. As a result the beasts would groan (Joel 1:18). Similarly, Joel told his audience that *the pastures of the wilderness* would turn *green* when God restored their fortunes. The wild animals would have plenty of grass to eat and would no longer groan, as they did when the land of Judah was devastated (1:18). There would also be food in abundance for human beings because *the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full*. That means there would be agricultural prosperity in the land of Judah because the Suzerain God would restore its fortunes.

Third, Joel addressed the *sons of Zion* and urged them to *rejoice and be glad in the LORD your God*. Mount *Zion* is in the southeastern part of the city of Jerusalem. It was the original location of the City of David, so it is a symbol of the seat of power of the kingdom. It is used here to refer to the entire land of Judah. The phrase *sons of Zion* thus refers to all those in Israel who grieved over the destruction caused by the locusts (Joel 1:5, 8, 11, 13).

In the first chapter, where Joel described the devastating effects of the locust plague, “gladness and joy” were “cut off” from the inhabitants of Judah (Joel 1:16). Now he invited the Jewish people to rejoice because *He [God] has given you the early rain for your vindication*.

The word translated *for your vindication* is most often translated as “righteousness” or “justice”—the idea that something lines up according to a proper standard. Other translations render the phrase *for your vindication* in verse 23 as “faithfully,” “moderately,” or “in just measure.” The idea seems to be that God will restore Israel’s climate to its proper standard. This would infer that God has a standard for the climate, and sometimes alters the climate for His purposes. When God restored the earth after destroying it with a flood (2 Peter 3:6), He made a climate promise; God promised that the earth would not be destroyed by water again, and there would be a cycle of four seasons on the earth so long as it remained (Genesis 8:22; 9:11).

The LORD would send rain to His people and His land, and the land would become fruitful, and be once again in harmony with the beasts and with His people. God would show mercy to them because He is “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness” (2:13).

The land of Judah (and Israel) was dependent upon God for *rain* throughout the growing seasons in order to be fruitful. The *early rain* or autumn rain (October-November) brings the dry summer to a close and loosens the soil in preparation for planting. The *latter rain* or spring rain (March-April) enables the final growth period before collecting the crops. In Deuteronomy, Moses told the people of Israel that such rain would allow them to “*gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil*” (Deuteronomy 11:14). Providing ample rain was a part of God’s covenant promise to Israel, in exchange for its obedience to follow God’s ways, and love their neighbors as themselves. This would explain why drought was a part of the judgment God brought to Judah due to its disobedience. But God would restore the land; Joel states here that God will pour out rain to cause Judah’s land to produce fruit for the people and grass for the animals.

Furthermore, Joel stated, *And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before*. The use of past tense indicates the certainty with which this future prediction will come to pass. Joel used this device in chapter 1 to indicate the certainty of judgement on Judah by picturing the looming invasion of Judah by another nation in the past tense. Joel 1:17 describes the lack of *early* rains leading to a situation where “The seeds shrivel under their clods,” meaning there was insufficient soil moisture for seeds to germinate. But *latter* rains are also necessary, so that crops have sufficient moisture to grow and fruit.

As a result of the *early rain* and *late rain*, *the threshing floors will be full of grain and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil*. The *threshing floor* refers to a hard, level surface on which the harvested grain is separated from the stalks and husks (Hosea 9:2). The term *vat* refers to a large tank designed to hold liquid. It refers to a hole excavated in rock that received the juice from grapes trodden out by pressing grapes in the winepress. *New wine* would indicate freshly produced wine, rather than wine stored from a prior harvest. The picture of the *threshing floors* being *full of grain* and the *vats* overflowing with *new wine and oil* makes it clear there will be a time when Judah’s economic prosperity will return.

The LORD then spoke to summarize the restoration. He summarized the blessings as a reversal of the disaster described in Joel 1:4. He declared, *Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust. My great army which I sent among you*. The locusts pictured a human army that had ravaged the land of Judah. Joel once again mentions the four types of locusts, as he did in 1:4. These likely represent four kingdoms who would invade Judah, starting with the Babylonian invasion, which began in 586 BC. Presuming the four kingdoms are the same four kingdoms as predicted in the book of Daniel, the four types of locusts would represent Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Following the sequence in Daniel 2, the Roman era will continue until God sets up a kingdom on the earth. So it seems likely that this prediction will have seasons of fulfillment, with an ultimate fulfillment at the end of the age, when the Messiah’s kingdom is set up on earth (Zechariah 14, Isaiah 2, Micah 4, Matthew 24, Luke 21, Daniel 2). It does not seem likely that any other explanation would fully *make up* to Judah *for the years* of damage done to the land by their invading armies.

Not only would God send *grain, wine, and oil* to His people, but they would *have plenty to eat and be satisfied*. This time of renewal would be a time when Israel would fully recognize that their bounty comes from the LORD. Such an abundance would prompt the people to *praise the name of the LORD your God*. This is likely also corresponds to the time when “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

The *name* of God is His character or His essence. God’s name is His reputation (Psalm 8). To praise the *name of the LORD* is thus to recognize God’s nature. To recognize that all His provisions are gracious. The people were to *praise the name of the LORD* because the LORD *has dealt wondrously with* the people of Judah. At this time there will be a full recognition by Judah of the true character and nature of their Suzerain ruler, the LORD their God.

Once God restored Judah’s fortunes, the people would *never be put to shame*. The word translated *never* is “owlam,” which means “for the age.” It is translated “of old” referring to the

age prior to the flood. It is also translated “perpetual”, “everlasting” and “forever”. Joel here predicts that after the anticipated restoration, for the rest of the age, Judah will not *be put to shame* through the judgement of being dominated by other nations.

It is clear that Judah will soon be put to shame as they are defeated and exiled from the land. So this likely refers to Judah’s final restoration, in the last days. This fits with the picture of the four kinds of locusts representing the four kingdoms that will dominate the earth prior to God raising up a kingdom not made with human hands (Daniel 2:44-45). This will be the kingdom of God come to earth.

Earlier in this passage, Joel asked the priests to pray that the LORD spare the people, lest they become “a byword among the nations” (Joel 2:17). Here, the LORD answered His people. He would no longer cause them to suffer shame and defeat. Thus, the other nations would not think that the God of Judah had abandoned them (2:17). We should note that the call for repentance in 2:16-17 references articles related to temple worship. Therefore, it seems likely that this time of repentance will be after Temple worship is restored in Israel. This is predicted in Revelation 11, which occurs at the end of the age.

God spelled out the purposes for which He would restore Judah’s blessings in being restored from the waves of locusts (invading kingdoms) in four parts: (1) *Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel*, (2) *that I am the LORD your God*, (3) *there is no other*, and (4) *My people will never be put to shame*.

First, the covenant people would recognize that God had not abandoned them. They will return to God, and know that He is the LORD. They will recognize that He is *in their midst* among them, in part because He is faithful to His promises. Even though God is merciful, He is always faithful to keep His part of the covenant with the Israelites, including the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that make up the southern kingdom of Judah.

Second, Judah would acknowledge the *LORD* as their *God*, the one who has a covenant relationship with them and the one who sees to their wellbeing when they are faithful to honor their part of the covenant.

Third, Judah would acknowledge that God alone is the true God. Besides Him, *there is no other*, because no other so-called gods could restore the people’s blessings.

Fourth, God’s people *would never* suffer *shame* and humiliation for this plague of locusts. God would take care of His covenant people and restore their reputation with other nations when they genuinely turned to Him in faith.

## **Biblical Text**

<sup>21</sup> **Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,  
For the  
Lord has done great things.**

<sup>22</sup> **Do not fear, beasts of the field,**

**For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,  
For the tree has borne its fruit,  
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.**

**<sup>23</sup> So rejoice, O sons of Zion,  
And be glad in the Lord your God;  
For He has given you the early rain for *your* vindication.  
And He has poured down for you the rain,  
The early and latter rain as before.**

**<sup>24</sup> The threshing floors will be full of grain,  
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.**

**<sup>25</sup> “Then I will make up to you for the years  
That the swarming locust has eaten,  
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,  
My great army which I sent among you.**

**<sup>26</sup> “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied  
And praise the name of the Lord your God,  
Who has dealt wondrously with you;  
Then My people will never be put to shame.**

**<sup>27</sup> “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
And that I am the Lord your God,  
And there is no other;  
And My people will never be put to shame.**