

Route Sixty-Six

Part Twenty-Nine

Joel

A Restoration

(John 5:39; Joel 2:25)

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org
www.branchofhope.org*

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A Restoration

(John 5:39; Joel 2:25)

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you (Joel 2:25).

Introduction

One of the glorious and accurate appeals to the Christian faith is the wonder and beauty of restoration. Job's great account of suffering and perseverance is concluded with the Lord restoring his fortunes, twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10). The parable of the Prodigal Son culminates with a warm and excited reception by the Father accompanied by the best robe, a ring of value, shoes on his feet and a fattened calf (Luke 15:22, 23). He was restored, not merely as a "**hired servant**", which he would have been satisfied with, but the full privileges of a son.

Sin is a thief (John 10:10). It presents its "**fleeting pleasures**" (**Hebrews 11:25**) then will leave you penniless sometimes body and soul, at least in soul. Whether it is our sin individually (as with the Prodigal) or sin in general (as with Job), the fall of man has left us with a keen and truthful sense that somebody has pilfered our house. And like a home invasion, there is a sense of loss and violation.

The world seeks to skate above the very thin ice of the sin plagued world. It dons numerous jackets and expensive skates. It can feel, at least in some sense, how shallow the ice is and how imminent the fall. Pain, sorrow and death are inevitable. No matter how skilled we are in enjoying the moment (a skill worth having-we should seek to enjoy our lives), there is something looming which requires restoration that the warm jackets of

human ingenuity and expensive skates of secular therapy simply cannot fix.

In this series we are examining how the Scriptures all testify of Jesus. Peter seized that thought when he preached the that prophets of old taught that Jesus would restore **“all things” (Acts 3:21)**. The magnitude of such a restoration extends to all of this groaning creation (Romans 8:22). But the central focus of this restoration are the individual souls of men and women. The Apostle Paul, knowing this, would write,

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

If there is any attribute or virtue which should typify the Christian faith, it is one of reconciliation and restoration. This may include restitution, as with Zacchaeus who restored **“fourfold”** all he had stolen (Luke 19:8), or a general willingness make things right in broken and difficult relationships.

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you (2 Corinthians 13:11).

It can easily be argued that the harshest indictments from the mouth of Christ were aimed against those who were unwilling to forgive and restore. Who does not take a deep breath and entertain second thoughts when praying, as Jesus taught us to pray, that we are to forgive **“as we also have forgiven” (Matthew 6:11)**? This is the only portion of the prayer which Jesus follows up with a brief commentary:

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 7:14).

Or consider Jesus’ parable of the Unforgiving Servant, how due to his lack of willingness to forgive another, he would be thrown into jail until he

paid (what amounted to be) his unpayable debt (Matthew 18:21-35). Truly, restoration is at the heart of the Christian faith.

How many of us have wandered into church hoping, even pining away, for restoration! It may be relationships, health, jobs, reputations, unrealized goals and ambitions, elusive joy or love. Sin has defaced all these things and we want them made right-restored. It is in Joel that God paints a graphic and fully orbed picture of restoration with the words:

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you (Joel 2:25).

Volumes have been written to describe the utter devastation of swarming locusts. They've been compared to a slow-moving, unstoppable devouring fire. They devour everything in their path. They have no leader but never break rank. From a distance they look like a cloud. They never stop. When a wall or a house gets in their way they blindly rush over or through. If there is water, they don't go around but through and drowned, providing a bridge for their companions. When they die their dead bodies produce a stench and often a plague.

The picture painted in Joel is that due to their rebellion, God would send an army of chewing, swarming, crawling, consuming locusts. All the farmers can do is feel shame that the sin of the nation had brought this, and all the vinedressers can do is wail. The joy had withered away, and this message should be conveyed to the children and all the following generations.

May this not be lost on us. For it is to a people who have come to realize that they were down to the bones of their existence that the message was given-all that they ruined; all that they consumed; the wreckage and debris in which they now sat, would one day, be fully restored. And the restoration would be far superior to any existence they had yet known.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you (1 Peter 5:10).

Survey of Joel

This brief book¹ opens with the announcement of this invasion of locusts. Joel is likely ministering in Judah and the nation is in a state of rebellion both morally and religiously. The Lord issues a very dramatic call to repentance with sackcloth and lamentations and the consecration of a fast (Joel 1:13, 14). Five times in this short book we read the phrase, **“The day of the Lord.”** This phrase should not be understood in such a way as to designate one event in human history, but a day of God’s special, great and magnificent visitation by God.

As we move into chapter two, we see that in addition to the swarm of locusts there is a future military threat. Again, the Lord accentuates the devastation.

**Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns.
The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind
them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them (Joel
2:3).**

In the midst of this the Lord ever offers and appeal to repent and be restored.

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster (Joel 2:12, 13).

In this sin-laden world, the Lord ever offers a path back. Yet His people would not hear. Captivity would be in their future. It is in the midst of their rebellion and devastation that the Lord offers these words of comfort, the words of restoration, that He would **“restore to you the years that the swarming locusts has eaten” (Joel 2:25).** What would be

¹ Written by Joel, whom we know little about and somewhere between 900BC and 600BC (simply unknown).

mechanism by which this would happen? Let us read of the wonderful promise which follows this pledge of restoration:

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. ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame (Joel 2:26, 27).

As we have learned, there are often more immediate fulfillments of these promises, but the deeper redemptive message comes with the ultimate fulfillment. And here it is not a difficult task to grasp the means by which the presence of God in the midst of His people will take place. For the very next passage is the passage to which Peter will appeal hundreds of years in the future-the beginning of the New Covenant church.

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, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. ³⁰ “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:28-32).

Christ in Joel

We ask, where is Christ in Joel? It is in Joel that we read one of the premiere prophecies that Christ will be known at all! Jesus had recently been crucified, resurrected and ascended (Acts 1:9). He had ordered the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until they received the “promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). Jesus had promised that He would send His Spirit who

would remind them of all the things He had taught them when He was with them (John 14:26; 15:27).

The Day of Pentecost came and it was a singularly miraculous event with the sound of rushing mighty winds, divided tongues as fire and the ability to speak languages they had never learned (Acts 2:1-5). The mockers accused everyone of being drunk (Acts 2:13). But Peter appealed to Joel and the pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17). It would no longer be one nation, but all peoples.

The message that Jesus had given to the apostles would now be supernaturally recalled and universally proclaimed. The confusion of the languages of Babel which rescued humanity from a false path to the heavens will be reversed and restored, where everyone would hear in their own language the true message of redemption in Christ.

Time does not allow a full treatment of this, but the signs, blood, fire smoke, sun turning dark and moon into blood, "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Acts 2:19, 20) would be taught of by Jesus on the Mount of Olives in His lesson on the destruction of the temple (Matthew 24). They were living in the generation where this would all take place.

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place (Matthew 24:34).

The promise of the Messiah had been fulfilled and Joel prophesied how it would be successfully disseminated. The Old Covenant would cataclysmically come to an end and the New Covenant would begin to spread.

It is difficult for the modern person (even Christian person) to realize what a huge event this was. B.C. would become A.D. Many are looking for Christ to come again and do more. He will come again in judgment, but there is no more work to be done. The entirety of this passage from Joel falls under Peter's finger when he uses the near demonstrative, "**...this is what is spoke by the prophet Joel**" (Acts 2:16).

We must leave this topic for now, for as I had mentioned, Peter quote the entire passage, culminating with the words:

**That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved
(Acts 2:21).**

It is the ultimate act of restoration and the source of all restoration. It belongs to those who, by the grace of God, call upon His name.

Questions for Study

1. How is restoration a beautiful attribute of the Christian faith (pages 2, 3)?
2. In what respects is sin a thief? What does it steal? How is it restored (pages 3, 4)?
3. How important is restoration, reconciliation, forgiveness in the teaching of Christ (pages 3, 4)?
4. What do locusts do? Can you think of some applications in your own life (page 4)?
5. What is the “day of the Lord” mean (page 5)?
6. How do we access the path back to restoration? How does Joel point us to Christ (pages 6, 7)?

