

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOEL 2 AND ACTS 2

When Joel says God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, he is saying that God will draw near to men to make Himself known in a powerful way. When God makes Himself known in people's lives it will be manifest in at least three ways. They may dream dreams, see visions, and prophesy (Jl.2:28). When God pours Himself into individuals their inner life is changed, and that full inner life speaks of God. Joel is predicting the day when all of God's people (in context, Israel) will receive God's Holy Spirit. So the question needs to be asked, Was Peter claiming that the pouring out of God's Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy?

Joel 2:28-32 — Predictions

"afterward" (Jl.2:28)

- ❶ "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh" (Jl.2:28)
- ❷ "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Jl.2:28)
- ❸ "Your old men shall dream dreams" (Jl.2:28)
- ❹ "Your young men shall see visions" (Jl.2:28)
- ❺ "on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Jl.2:29)
- ❻ "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke" (Jl.2:30)
- ❼ "The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Jl.2:31)
- ❽ "whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved" (Jl.2:32)
- ❾ "For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls" (Jl.2:32)

Acts 2:1-21 — Actual Events

"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:" (Ac.2:16)

- ❶ "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Ac.2:2)
- ❷ "Divided tongues, as of fire" (Ac.2:3)
- ❸ "Filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac.2:4)
- ❹ "Everyone heard them speak in his own language" (Ac.2:6)

EVENTS THAT ARE COMMON

- (1) The pouring out of the Holy Spirit. ❸
 - (2) Prophesying is implied in that there was speaking in tongues which are known languages. Some message was spoken. ❹
- The out pouring of the Holy Spirit. Joel speaks of pouring out His Spirit upon the whole house of Israel ("all flesh"). And that this would be in the last days (Ho.3:5). In Acts 2 it was 120 Hebrew believers. Peter applied Joel 2 to the Pentecost event by saying that the same Holy Spirit Joel wrote about is here! It is building toward the ultimate.
 - The kingdom has been inaugurated (in the present), but not fully consummated (still future) [historical/eschatological]. This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet! The same is true concerning the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. This is a down payment (2Co.1:22; 5:5), and a taste of the age to come (Hb.6:5).

THERE ARE MORE DIFFERENCES THAN THERE ARE SIMILARITIES

- Peter emphasizes the expansion of the Church to include previously excluded peoples. This inclusion is possible as people call on the Lord which is in line with Joel 2:32. As new people call on the Lord they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost Peter experienced something similar to what Joel 2:28-32 proclaimed would occur upon the nation of Israel. The other prophecies, including the cosmic events, will not take place till Israel turns to the Lord at the end of Daniel's 70th week (Tribulation period) and Jesus Christ returns to bless Israel.
- Joel's intended fulfillment is said to be "afterward", that is, at the end of Daniel's 70th prophetic week when Israel turns to the Lord (Ho.5:15; Zc.12:10; Is.59:20; Ps.79:1-13; 80:1-19; Rm.11:25-27). Joel's use of the "last days" refers to the Tribulation (Jl.2:30-31) and the Millennium (Jl.2:28-29). Joel's prophecy, as quoted in Acts, is like the "former rain" (Jl.2:23), and the remaining events are like the "latter rain" (Jl.2:31-32).
- Joel says "all flesh" will receive the Spirit. This includes all classes of people (men, women, children, slave, and free). Certainly 120 Jews receiving this outpouring is a far cry compared to Joel's prediction that it would be 'upon all flesh'. Thus, it is not the final or complete fulfillment.
- Peter referred to Joel's prophecy as, "this is that." This must refer to the pouring out of the Spirit since it is the only prediction of Joel that occurred on Pentecost. Peter wanted the Jews to recognize what they were seeing as a work of the Holy Spirit. And it should be seen as a guarantee that God would fulfill this promise yet in the future. It was sort of a prophetic illustration of the Spirit's work. He seems to apply it because of the one similarity. Peter purposely goes beyond any possible fulfillment at Pentecost by quoting events that did not occur.
- What Joel mentions (dreams, visions, sun darkened, moon turned to blood) did not happen in Acts 2.