Joel 2:28-29 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

What an absolutely wonderful prophecy of Joel. Now there is some controversy found in the context of these words. That controversy revolves around the phrase “And afterward” found in this text. That phrase refers to the verses beforehand, the key verse being verse 23, **“Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.”**

I know, that doesn’t sound very controversial. The controversy is found in how to translate the words here. It could be translated: **“Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the teacher of righteousness. He comes to you as the early and late rains as the sum.”** As you can see, in this translation it is less about the promise of rain as it is the promise of the Teacher of righteousness and the blessings He will bring. Either way you translate, the understanding is the blessings the Lord will shower upon his people. The difference is in grasping whether those blessings are just because of the rain or those blessings happen because God sends his Messiah.

I will tell you that I am inclined to take the translation that refers to the blessings of the Messiah and what He will bring. He will be the Teacher of righteousness. He will pour out this blessings upon God’s people. And as you read verses 23-27 with the idea of the Messiah in mind, you can see how Jesus’ life fits these words in a spiritual way. The people are filled, the harvest is great and the wonders of the Lord are made obvious! I lean this way for two very important reasons.

In the Septuagint, that Greek translation of the Hebrew done by the 70 Jewish scholars around 200 BC, they translate verse 23 with the Greek word for “food or meat.” I find it interesting that they don’t choose to translate with “teacher”, seem to completely ignore the thought that this could be “early rain” and go directly with what they believe the intent of the passage is: “The solid food or meat that the Messiah will be and is.” I see no reason for modern translators to depart from the knowledge that those Jewish scholars had and understood at a time when Hebrew was their language and was the language of the prophets.

The second reason I like for this passage being about the Messiah is because that is exactly what Peter, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares. He declares that the day of Pentecost is the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy! It is a fulfillment that takes place “after” the coming of the Messiah, after the blessings, wonders and revelations of Jesus had come to a head. Since Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and since Pentecost and what happened there is exactly what Jesus said He and the Father would bring upon the people, it stands to reason that Joel’s prophecy is about the Messiah and what that Messiah brings. Yes, this chapter is about the Teacher of Righteousness and what will follow when that teacher of righteousness has brought forth his blessings! Let’s you and I jump in then and contemplate this promise of the Lord that is fulfilled on this day. Our theme will be: **THE SPIRIT POURED OUT.**

What does Joel say? He begins, **“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** We just had a discussion about what “and afterward” means. It is a reference to the blessings that the Messiah, the Teacher of Righteousness, fulfilled in Jesus will bring. Think of what Jesus did. He not only went to the cross to die there for the sins we have committed, Jesus also served the purpose of fully and truly revealing the will and wonder of God the Father. We know the Father and his will because of Jesus! We have the promise of life, truth, bread, water, shepherd, light, vine, and teacher in Jesus. We are told that to know Jesus is to know the Father and that without Jesus we cannot grasp the Father and his will. All of this serves as the reason for the sending of God’s Holy Spirit.

Again it is Jesus who clarifies what the Holy Spirit will do. He says, **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—The Spirit of truth…the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you…When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me…When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned…he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.** (John 14-16).”

So once Jesus brings us the full revelation and wonder of the Father, the realization of his victory over sin, death and the Devil, Jesus then makes it clear that He and the Father are going to send the Holy Spirit of God and that’s why Joel very clearly says of the work of God, **“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** We are the recipients of that Holy Spirit first given, well, really, first poured out on the day of Pentecost.

Now why did I say that? That the Holy Spirit was first poured out rather than first given? Because the Holy Spirit has always been at work. He was involved in the Creation of the world. He was the power and truth behind every prophet of God who laid forth the plans and wonders of God. Even in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is the acknowledged giver of faith and the revealer of truth. The difference in the New Testament is the great change that will now take place. I think we can grasp that change as we contemplate the idea that the Holy Spirit will be **“poured out”.** In the Old Testament the gift of being a prophet or a priest was only given to a few, but now in the New Testament as seen at Pentecost, that Holy Spirit is given to everyone. Everyone will serve the Lord. Everyone will be given the ability to speak of the wonder and awe, the marvel and truth of God.

We see the New Testament truth in Joel’s words, **“Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”** In other words, everyone will benefit from this gift of the Holy Spirit, everyone will be a part of the awe and glory of what we have in Jesus. That’s poured out!

Let’s boil the words down a bit more. As you look at all the words here this gift of the Spirit is not in any way limited. Men and women will be the recipients of this gift. We can see that on Pentecost. We are told that there were 120 believers in Jesus in those days. And we are told that on Pentecost, all the believers received the tongue of flame and perhaps even the gift of speaking in a foreign language. The men were able to relay the message of Jesus to the men and the women were able to relay the victory of Jesus to the women gathered there. God’s servants, all who were to be believers, men or women were given this awesome gift to the glory of Jesus.

And so they prophesied. What that means is that they became the spokesmen for God and his truth. All too often, we think the word “prophesied” means we will foretell the future. Yet that is not the meaning of the Hebrew word. In Hebrew that word means you speak for someone else. In our Sunday bible class we are now covering the Book of Exodus. When Moses proclaimed he shouldn’t have to go free the Jewish people because he wasn’t a good talker, God told him Aaron his brother would be his “spokesman,” yes, his prophet! All prophets were spokesmen for God. They told you what God’s will and plan was for the world. Sometimes, they were allowed to foretell the future but most of the time they simply preached the truth and wonder of God, especially pointing to the Messiah and the righteousness He would bring.

That brings us to the question, “So should we expect dreams, visions and revelations of the future?” I don’t think so, well, not in the way some would believe. I think these words were the Hebrew way of speaking of the work of the prophet. The prophet sometimes was given dreams, sometimes visions and sometimes knowledge of future events. But that is not the main function and work of the prophet as I already mentioned. The main function of the prophet was to preach and teach God’s Word. I believe that once the work of the Word was completed, that once the Bible was fully recorded for us (as all were moved by the Holy Spirit) our focus was to become that Word of God. If you want to claim that your dreams are from God, fine, but your interpretation of that dream had better be in keeping with God’s Word. God’s Word is the standard for us, the verbally inspired, absolutely truthful, revelation of God. It is all measured on that. The dreams, visions and revelations revealed in the Word is all that we need today. Because of God’s clear and precise Word, given by the Holy Spirit, we can all know the wonders of heaven, the power of Jesus, the truth of redemption and sanctification and the complete sureness of eternal life by grace through faith. That is what counts.

Can God’s Holy Spirit still do his work? He does every day! He is bringing souls to life from the death of sin. He is giving hope and comfort, encouragement and strength, joy and peace…all in and through the message of Jesus. I don’t need visions of a 300 ft. Jesus or the ability to babble worthless syllables to prove my faith. My faith rests on the word and truth the Holy Spirit has given, which is the Bible! I will always let my faith rest entirely and only on God’s Holy Word and nothing else. Besides, seriously, if we were to believe what every modern prophet proclaims was revealed to him in visions, dreams and other such things, I am afraid that we would have lost the truth of Jesus long ago. And what is also interesting is how diverse and mixed up the modern revelations are compared to what God has given in His Word.

Please, the day of Pentecost is a wonder. The Holy Spirit has come and because of that we have the wonder and truth of God’s Word and will in our midst. The Spirit, as Jesus promised, has testified to and of Jesus for our eternal life and salvation. The Spirit has come to make us God’s servants and to urge us, to cause us, to share with the world the wonder and awe of Jesus. His power is still at work. It is the reason that you are here. It is the reason for the hope and comfort you have in Jesus. It is reason that you know you are a child of God and an heir of eternal life. May God then, continue to pour out His Spirit on us! Amen.