

Joel Lesson 14

Some Comments About the Handout for Lesson 14

My goal with this handout was to collect all of the direct evidence that we have about the Holy Spirit, where by "direct" I mean those verses in the Bible that *directly* name or otherwise *directly* refer to the Holy Spirit. Of course, we need to consider the Bible in its entirety, but perhaps these verses are the ones that we should consider first when we want to learn about the Holy Spirit.

Absent the verses on the Handout for Lesson 14, I think we would all be like the people in Acts 19:2 who had "not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

How did I compile these verses?

- First, I pulled out all of the verses in the ESV that contain the word "Spirit" with a capital S. That process gives us all of the verses that contain either the Hebrew or Greek word translated "spirit" and that the ESV translators believed was a reference to the Holy Spirit (as opposed, for example, to the spirit of man or the spirit of the world).
- Second, I repeated that process for another translation and compared the two lists. That exercise gave me the 8 additional verses that are listed at the bottom of the first page of the handout.
- Third, I added a few verses in which the Holy Spirit is referred to as "he" or by some word other than "Spirit" (such as "Helper" in John 16:7-8).

That process yielded the 252 numbered passages on the Handout. Let me know if you spot any verses that I missed.

Also, if you really want to "geek out" on this subject, I created and uploaded a complete concordance of these 252 verses so that you can pick any word in these verses and then very quickly look at how and where that word is used in every verse from the list that contains the word.

Why did I do all of this?

One reason is the same reason that any lawyer looks at all the evidence prior to a deposition or trial -

to avoid surprises! Theories that don't consider all the evidence tend to be very fragile theories!

A second reason I created this list is to avoid the problem described in the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant.

That parable tells of several blind men touching different parts of an elephant and describing it based only on what each can feel. One feels the trunk and says it's like a snake, another the leg and says it's like a tree, and so on. Each man is convinced that his view is correct, but none of them gets it right because none of them considers the entire elephant. If we want to properly and thoroughly understand any topic in the Bible, we need to consider all the evidence that we have about that topic in the Bible.

And a third reason I created this list is because I need it in my own study of the Holy Spirit as I prepare for the upcoming lessons on that topic. As you recall from the questions on the Handout for Lesson 12, a number of our questions about Joel 2 are questions about the Holy Spirit. I need this list as I work through those questions, and I suspect that you may find it helpful as you do the same in your own personal study.

And the best way to use this handout is to carefully review the content of these verses, while looking them up when you need to read the entire context.

But, as I printed these handouts, it struck me that we can perhaps learn something important about the Holy Spirit, not just from the *content* of the verses, but from the *location* of the verses.

Think for a moment about question #17 from our list of questions on the Handout for Lesson 12: Why is that promise of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2 described using the word "pour"?

When we use the word "pour" we often use it to refer to something large and gushing. The rain was *pouring* down! He *poured* out his heart to her. The crowds *poured* into the stadium.

But how does the location of these verses help us understand why God used the word "pour" when it comes to this promise about the Holy Spirit?

Turn to the last passage on the last page of the handout - what number is it? It is number 252.

Now turn to verse #73 on the second page of the Handout. That verse is the final verse from the Old Testament. What that means is that only 73 of the 252 passages on this Handout are from the Old

Testament. The other 179 passages are from the New Testament.

In fact, if you are looking for the exact phrase "Holy Spirit" in the Old Testament, you will find it in only two places: (#36) Psalm 51:11 and (#51) Isaiah 63:10-11.

The New Testament makes up about 25% of the Bible. But when it comes to passages about the Holy Spirit, that statistic flips. Over 70% of the passages about the Holy Spirit in the Bible are from the New Testament.

I think what that tells us is that something very important happened with regard to the Holy Spirit in the move from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Was that important event perhaps the pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh? Is that why we see this explosion of spirit verses in the New Testament?

Perhaps we will see when we get to end of Joel 2, but for now please use this handout in your own studies, and please hang on to it for upcoming lessons - we will need it (and especially the numbers) later!

Joel 2:5, Continued

Joel 2:5 - As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle.

Last week, we looked at the word "like" in verse 5, and what we found is that the underlying Hebrew word in verse 5 does **not** mean that we are still looking at locusts (even though the English word might cause us to think otherwise before taking a closer look).

Instead, we can translate that word "like" with the word "as." So rather than these "people" from verse 2 coming in verse 5 **"like** a powerful army drawn up for battle," they are instead coming **"as** a powerful army drawn up for battle." There is no reason for us to see locusts in verse 5.

A second reason why we should not leap to locusts in verse 5 is the strength and pervasiveness of the military descriptions that we see in this second chapter of Joel.

The description of a "powerful army" that we see at the end of verse 5 is not standing alone in this

chapter. Instead, we find military descriptions all throughout these opening verses.

- Verse 1 - Blow a trumpet; sound an alarm.
- Verse 2 - There is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people.
- Verse 3 - Nothing escapes them.
- Verse 4 - Like war horses they run.
- Verse 5 - The rumbling of chariots.
- Verse 5 - Like a powerful army drawn up for battle.
- Verse 7 - Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall.
- Verse 7 - They march each on his way.
- Verse 8 - They burst through the weapons and are not halted.
- Verse 9 - They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls.
- Verse 11 - The LORD utters his voice before his army.

As one commentator said, "the military language throughout this chapter is too strong to be accidental or to be dismissed as metaphor." (And, as we said last week, people who had just lived through a locust invasion hardly needed any analogies to describe another locust invasion!)

And a third reason why we should not see only locusts in Joel is that we do not see only locusts in Deuteronomy. Instead, in Deuteronomy 28 we see a locust invasion followed by a human invasion. Likewise, in Joel, I think we are seeing a locust invasion followed by a human invasion.

In short, I think the evidence is overwhelming that we are not seeing a locust invasion here in Chapter 2. I think we are seeing a human invasion.

But why all the confusion? Why do so many people still see nothing but locusts in Joel 2?

I think the answer is simple - the locusts in Joel 1 were a foreshadowing of what was yet to come. I think that is what Joel 1:15 told us. The locusts were not the big event; the locusts were the warm-up act for the big event!

And so what then do we expect Joel to do in Chapter 2? Do we expect Joel to forget all about those locusts when he starts telling us about this invading army of people? Or do we expect Joel to somehow link the two events?

I think we would expect Joel to stress the connection between the two events. In fact, that is why God tells us about the locusts in the first place. The theme of this book is not the day of the locust. The theme of this book is the day of the Lord - and those locusts were pointing toward that day of the Lord (Joel 1:15).

The locusts were sent by God for a purpose - to awaken the people to what was coming. And how did the locusts do that? They did that by being similar in some ways to what was coming - both events are described as devastating invasions.

Here is how one commentary describes what the book of Joel is doing:

We misread Joel if we think the text demands we exclusively see either locusts or a human army. On the contrary, Joel consciously drew the two ideas together here so that an army is described under the metaphor of a locust invasion. He spoke of chariots, armies drawn up for battle, and the scaling of walls, but the picture of the locust plague from Chapter 1 still prompts and to some degree determines the descriptions. Thus the fact that a locust swarm may sound like wildfire and look like horses does not contradict but contributes to the vision of the fury of the northern army. The locusts were both the symbol for that army and its precursor, and Joel used language that projected both pictures into the readers' minds. To use an example from the modern world of computer-aided multimedia, it is as if we see the locusts of Chapter 1 'morphing' into soldiers and cavalry before our eyes.

So, if we read verse 5 and think about locusts, I think that is what God intends for us to do. The locusts are certainly still lurking in the background of Chapter 2.

But, if we read verse 5 and think **only** about locusts, then I do **not** think that is what God intended for us to do.

God was telling us about locusts in Chapter 1, but God has moved on to another subject in Chapter 2

- and we need to keep up! The locusts are in the background of Joel 2, but the locusts are no longer in the foreground.

Joel 2:6

Joel 2:6 - Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale.

In verse 2, we were told about "a great and powerful people" that was spread upon the mountains. Here in verse 6, we are told about "peoples" who are in anguish and growing pale in the face of that great army.

The Hebrew word for "people" is the same in both verses 2 and 6. Are we really intended to conclude that some, but not all, of the people in Joel 2 are not really people but instead are locusts?

It seems that if the people are people in verse 6, then the people in verse 2 should also be people. I think the word "peoples" in verse 6 confirms what we said about the word "people" in verse 2 - we are seeing a huge **human** army in these verses.

Why do we see the *plural* "peoples" in verse 6?

One commentator says that "it could be argued that there is no perfect English equivalent for the plural noun" translated "peoples" in the ESV. The Hebrew word is a general word that refers to a group of people in any number of different settings. Some translations use the somewhat odd English word "peoples" while others just use the already plural word "people." Some suggest that the word "nations" should be used here, which would again suggest that we are seeing a human invasion that affects more than just Jerusalem and Judah. But most likely, the plural word just means that all sorts of groups will tremble in view of the coming army. We saw such groups in Chapter 1 with Joel's messages to elders, drunkards, farmers, and priests.

And what happens when that huge human army arrives? What happens is just what we would expect to happen - the people are in anguish; the people are terrified.

There is a translation issue in verse 6 with the phrase "all faces grow pale." Here are some other proposed translations:

- "every face is like a scorched pot"

- "all faces are covered with a coating of black like a pot"
- "all faces shall gather blackness"
- "every face will be like a burnt earthen pot"
- "all faces have withdrawn their color"
- "all faces gathered a glow"
- "every face gathers heat"

Literally, the phrase means "all faces gather in *parur*," where the Hebrew word *parur* is found only twice in the Bible.

Which translation is best? I think that perhaps Isaiah 13 can help us answer this question. Not because Isaiah 13 uses the same Hebrew word, but because Isaiah 13 gives us a similar description about another day of the Lord.

Isaiah 13:7-8 - Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; **their faces will be aflame.**

I think Joel is likely telling us the same thing about how the people would react to this day of the Lord - that it would cause their faces to be aflame. Their faces would be flush with fear and with anguish.

Such reactions by the people are extremely intense, and I think that intensity is more evidence of what we are seeing here.

Yes, locusts showing up to eat your crops is a terrible event - but those locusts are not going to eat you. They are not going to burn your house down. They are not going to assault you. They are not going to tear down your walls. They are not going to carry you off into exile.

I think the intense reactions that we are seeing in Chapter 2 is further evidence that we are seeing something other than locusts here. This threat is much worse than the threat of the locusts.

As one commentator rightly (but tersely) concludes about the subject of verse 6, "locusts as such are by no means meant."

Joel 2:7

Joel 2:7 - Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths.

Once again, verse 7 reminds us of something that we have already concluded - this book of Joel was not written during the exile. Either Joel was written before the exile, or Joel was written after the days of Nehemiah.

And how do we know that? We know that because there are still walls around the city of Jerusalem in verse 7. Whether these soldiers are soldiers or locusts, they are scaling walls. That tells us either that Nebuchadnezzar had not yet torn down those walls or that Nehemiah had already rebuilt those walls.

What we said about the word "like" in verse 5 applies here again in verse 7. I think what this verse is telling us is that "**as** warriors they charge" and "**as** soldiers they scale the wall."

And, again, it is okay to read these descriptions and think about locusts. In fact, I think we are intended to read these descriptions and think about locusts. I think the mistake happens if we read these descriptions and think **only** about locusts.

I think that instead we should be seeing human warriors and human soldiers marching and scaling these walls. And I think that is the natural way to read this verse given that it never uses the word "locust," but instead uses the words "warriors" and "soldiers."

When the locusts showed up in Joel 1, what word did Joel use to describe them? He used the word "locust" in verse 4.

And now in Joel 2, what word does Joel use to describe this new threat? Does Joel call them locusts? No. Joel calls them people. He calls them a powerful army. He calls them warriors. He calls them soldiers. He never calls them locusts.

As one commentary explains, verse 7 is describing "a highly trained, effective military force."

These warriors and soldiers are disciplined, and they do not break rank or lose that discipline even when they are attacking. That they are scaling the walls tells us that they know how to conduct a siege. And that they are charging tells us that they are powerful and fearless.

And notice that the walls are being *scaled*. That is very different from locusts clinging to the walls.

And locusts did most of their damage out in the fields rather than inside the city walls. But not so with human soldiers. That they are scaling the walls means that the last defenses of the city have been breached and the people are about to be slaughtered.

Is this army the Babylonian army? It is if the pre-exile option is the correct view for when the book of Joel was written.

Is this description in Joel 2 an accurate description of the Babylonian army? Was the Babylonian army disciplined, skilled, powerful, and fearless?

Yes, it was. And we know that from historical accounts both in and out of the Bible. As for those historical accounts in the Bible, we can read about the Babylonian army in the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 1:6-11 - For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!

Jeremiah also describes the Babylonian army.

Jeremiah 6:22-25 - Thus says the LORD: "Behold, a people is coming from the north country, a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth. They lay hold on bow and javelin; they are cruel and have no mercy; the sound of them is like the roaring sea; they ride on horses, set in array as a man for battle, against you, O daughter of Zion!" We have heard the report of it; our hands fall helpless; anguish has taken hold of us, pain as of a woman in labor. Go not out into the field, nor walk on the road, for the enemy has a sword; terror is on every side.

Those descriptions are terrifying even now! Can we imagine how terrifying it was for the people who met that Babylonian army in person?

Joel 2:8-9

Joel 2:8-9 - They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. 9 They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief.

Now those two verses sounds just like a bunch of locusts. And if we don't believe it, we can just read any newspaper article about a locust invasion. Whenever such articles quote Joel, they most often quote these two verses.

But that should not surprise us no matter how we view Chapter 2.

If we (like many) take Joel 2 to be all about locusts, then naturally these verses look like locusts. But if (as I think is correct) we think Joel 2 is about a human army, then we have already said that Joel is describing that army at times by looking back at the locust invasion that the people had just endured. Either way, it is not surprising that these verses look like locusts.

But, again, we have the same question we had before: which is it? Are we seeing locusts looking like locusts, or are we seeing people looking like locusts?

Didn't verse 2 answer that question? "Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful **people**." When Joel 1 opened, Joel used the word "locusts." When Joel 2 opened, Joel used the word "people."

I think we are still looking at those same people here in verse 9, but Joel is describing that great and powerful army in a way that reminds his listeners (and us!) of a great and powerful *locust* invasion.

And those two armies do have much in common!

- Both look unstoppable - "they burst through the weapons and are not halted; they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief."
- Both look very disciplined - "they do not jostle one another; each marches in his path."

- Neither has any trouble defeating the city's defenses - "they leap upon the city, they run upon the walls."

And again, what I think Joel is saying is that if they thought the locusts were bad, then they hadn't seen anything yet. What was coming would be much worse than those locusts, and what was coming was not a long way off - it was near!

But what about the many who see locusts here in these two verses? Don't verses 8-9 *prove* that this chapter is about locusts? No. In fact, I think the opposite is true. I think verses 8-9 show that this chapter is **not** about locusts!

First, let's look at the *position* of these two verses. Verses 8-9 are the climax of this description of the invading army. Verses 1-7 have been building up to verses 8-9 as their conclusion.

So what does that tell us? What does it tell us that the climax of the destruction in verse 9 is the entry of something into the people's homes? It tells us that that something is not a locust!

Yes, locusts entered people's houses, but entering your home was not the ultimate goal of those locusts and entering your home was not the worst place of the devastation left behind by those locusts. The locusts were after the crops, the devastation of the locusts was the destruction of those crops, and that devastation took place in your fields rather than in your house.

Yes, it was inconvenient to have locusts in your house - but those locusts were not killing the people inside that house. And I suspect that if anyone had been given a choice between locusts in their house and locusts in their fields, they would have thrown the doors of their house wide open to invite those locusts inside.

But not so with this army. This army seems to have those houses as its ultimate goal. This whole description has been leading up to the horror of having this terrible invading army entering your own home. "They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief."

In Joel 2 the climax of the attack is the invasion into homes. That is not true of a locust invasion, but it is true of a human invasion.

And, in fact, that is precisely what we see with Nebuchadnezzar's attack of Jerusalem.

Hababbuk 1:6 - For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, **to seize dwellings not their own.**

Jeremiah 52:13 - And he burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house and **all the houses** of Jerusalem; **every great house he burned down.**

And when did Nebuchadnezzar enter those homes? Was it the *first* thing he entered? No. He first had to go through those fields that were outside, and then he had to get over the walls, but he eventually ended up inside the homes. And that is the same order of events that we find here in Joel 2.

And that is also what we see in Isaiah 13 with God's judgment of Babylon.

Isaiah 13:15-16 - Whoever is found will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; **their houses will be plundered** and their wives ravished.

And, again, that entry into homes occurs at the end of the invasion. That entry into homes was the goal of the invasion.

And think back to Chapter 1. Yes, that chapter mentioned a house - but it was the Lord's house. The devastation in Joel 1 was not what happened to the people's houses, but rather was what happened to their fields and their crops. "The fields are destroyed, the ground mourns, because the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil languishes." (Verse 10)

But Chapter 2 is different. It not only describes what happens to the people's homes, but it describes that event as the climax of the terrible invasion.

I think Joel 2 is about a human invasion. And rather than proving the opposite as some suggest, I think verses 8-9 are instead perhaps some of the best evidence that what we are seeing here is a **human** army.

Joel 2:10

Joel 2:10 - The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

Up until verse 10, things in Joel 2 have been pretty straightforward. Yes, we might disagree about whether we are seeing an invasion of locusts or an invasion of people, but we know we are seeing an invasion of something.

But then suddenly things get complicated here in verse 10. An earthquake? Trembling heavens? A darkened sun and moon? Stars not shining? What is going on here?

Some might say that it is all just smoke from the fires that we saw back in verse 3. Maybe this smoke is what darkened the sun and moon. Maybe this smoke is what kept people from seeing the stars. But then how do we explain the earthquake? How do we explain the trembling of the heavens? How could either of those things be caused by a fire?

So what then is happening in verse 10? I think the answer is pretty simple when we think about what is going on here, and when we look at other similar descriptions in the Bible.

Let's start with something similar that we often see today in the secular world.

What happens when a football team first runs onto the field at the beginning of a big game? What happens when a famous rock star first comes out from behind the curtain at the beginning of a big concert? What about Elvis? Did Elvis just walk out and start singing, or did something else happen first?

What happened first was a grand entrance! Long before we ever saw Elvis emerge in his jumpsuit, the lights would dim and the music would build to a crescendo.

And do you know what? Elvis was not the first one to ever do that! I think that what we are seeing and hearing in verse 10 is a grand entrance!

We are in verse 10 now. Look quickly at who we will see in the very next verse - "The LORD utters his voice before his army!" Verse 10 is what happens just before God shows up in verse 11.

Let's read verse 10 again with that thought in mind: "The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining."

Has there ever been any other grand entrance like that one? That is what happens when God walks out onto the stage!

Yes, I know that many people read verse 10 and think that we must be reading about the end of the world, and maybe they would have a point if the book of Joel consisted only of verse 10. But it does not. There are a bunch of other verses in Joel, and when we read verse 10 in its context we know that we are not reading about the end of the world here. We are instead reading about an invasion that was coming and that was near when the book was written.

Verse 10 is God's grand entrance. Do we see such a grand entrance anywhere else in the Bible? Yes, we do.

Listen to how King David describes God's grand entrance in his great song of deliverance in 2 Samuel 22.

2 Samuel 22:7-11 - In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears. **Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked**, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens **and came down**; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew; he was seen on the wings of the wind.

The earth reeled and rocked. That word "rocked" in 2 Samuel is the same word translated "tremble" in verse 10.

We see something similar with God's judgment of Babylon in Isaiah 13.

Isaiah 13:13 - Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

And we see something similar with Jesus' judgment of Jerusalem in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:29-30 - Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken**. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**.

But that has to be the end of the world, right? Wrong. In fact, we know with certainty that Matthew

24:29-30 happened in the first century. How do we know that? We know that because we have read verse 34.

Matthew 24:34 - Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Yes, some day Jesus will return and the sun, moon, and stars will literally darken. On that last day, the heavens will literally be shaken. But all throughout the Bible we see those same events being used figuratively to describe earlier times when God came in judgment - for example, in Joel 2 for a judgment against Judah; in Isaiah 13 for a judgment against Babylon; and, in Matthew 24 for a judgment against Jerusalem.

#JOEL