

# AFTERWARD...!

*"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh..." Joel 2:28*

When we read the word "afterward" in this text, we know there is something very important that must happen "before" God will "pour out His Spirit." The prophet Joel told us clearly what God's requirements were if they were to receive the blessing of God. He wrote, *"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God"* Joel 2:12-13. To the "ministers of the LORD" he said, *"Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar,* and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: *wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"* Joel 2:17.

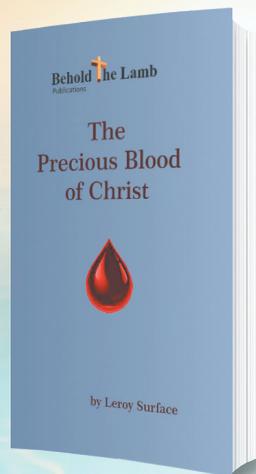
Destruction and desolation had been spoken against the land of Israel if they did not repent and turn from their ungodly ways. If they turned to God with their whole heart, God bring a blessing instead, and "pour out His Spirit" upon them. If they did not turn, however, Jerusalem and their temple would be destroyed and the people would go into captivity. The fact that God did not "pour out His Spirit" until the Day of Pentecost, which came over 800 years later, is evidence enough that the people did not turn from their wicked ways. The northern tribes of Israel went into captivity within 100 years, and about 200 years later, Jerusalem and Judea were taken captive, and the temple utterly destroyed. Joel's prophecy of judgment was fulfilled upon the nation, and the blessing never came to them.

It is almost universally believed that the greatest "outpouring" of God's Spirit is coming in the near future. This I know; it cannot come until the conditions God laid out through the prophet Joel have been met. The modern church that is satisfied to continue in sin will never see revival. God's condition is "turn to me with all your heart," and "rend your heart, and not your garments." When our hearts are "broken" over the sinful condition of the "church," and we are "weeping between the porch and the altar," the promise of God is near. In the last chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, God was looking for a "house" in which to dwell, because the temple in Jerusalem was filled with idols. He said, *"To this man (or woman) will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word"* Isaiah 66:2. God said, *"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"* Isaiah 57:15. I recently read the exhortation of a famous ministry; *"Get ferocious, and dismantle your enemy!"* Oh! Do we not know our "enemy" was not only "dismantled" I John 3:8, but totally "destroyed" Hebrews 2:14, by the "meek and lowly Jesus" through His death on the cross? The apostle John said, *"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth*

*hath not seen him, neither known him"* I John 3:5-6 KJV. Do we "know" these things that were "common knowledge" to those who believed the apostle John? These sayings and many such like are "the truth," which Jesus said will "make you free" John 8:32 from sin.

All the Old Testament prophets warned the children of Israel to "turn to God," but they could not. It is not in the ability of fallen man to change his heart and mind. The prophet Ezekiel told the people, *"...make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* Ezekiel 18:31. After it was proven that man cannot change his heart, God gave a wonderful promise through this same prophet; *"I will give you a new heart and a new spirit"* Ezekiel 36:26. The promise of the outpouring of God's Spirit is in the next verse; *"And I will put my spirit within you!"* Before God could do any of this, however, He gave this promise; *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you"* Ezekiel 36:25.

After following Jesus for over three years, and hearing His teaching, the twelve chosen disciples were in complete disarray. One of them sold Jesus to His enemies for thirty pieces of silver, and another denied, with an oath and cursing, that he ever knew Him. Two of them did not yet believe He was the Son of God, and all of them forsook Him in their night of fear. It was not possible that God would "pour out His Spirit" upon these. Something had to happen "before" in order for the "after" to come. This is why Christ died, and why He shed His holy blood. He came into the world to "take away the sin of the world" John 1:29, and to "purify the hearts" of His people from all sin. We could never "turn to God with all our heart," so God raised Jesus from the dead and sent Him to us, who could not "turn," to "turn us every one from our iniquities" Acts 3:26. He "washed us from our sins in His own blood" Revelation 1:5, and after the "church" is thus cleansed, God will "pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh..." It can only come "afterward."



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