

Acts Chapter 2:18-21

18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Even on my male servants and female servants- If there was going to be someone prophesying, it would make sense that it would be those of favored status. However, God speaks through Joel saying the Holy Spirit would be poured out "even on my servants." Servant is a dressed-up way of saying slave. The Roman Empire was composed of as much as 30 to 40 percent slaves. Slaves were second-class citizens who were bound to their masters as property with no personal rights. They were thought to be unlikely to receive anything from God. Although we may not like the idea, all Christians are slaves to God, because we belong to Him through Jesus. That's much better than being a slave to sin and Satan.

In those days- again referring to the Last Days which were ushered in by the work of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

I will pour out my Spirit- This is the same exact wording as the previous verse, when it was talking about sons and daughters. This shows us that the servants will receive a full portion of the Holy Spirit, rather than scraps or leftovers.

And they shall prophesy- Prophesying would not bring glory to themselves, but glory to God. God would use them as His instruments, that He might spread the Gospel.

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

And I will show wonders- In 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul writes that an apostle was signaled in particular ways like signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. These words are synonyms and all refer to miraculous activity. You will see them often used together in a poetic way. However, each has a slightly different connotation. Mighty works comes from the Greek word for "power," where we get the English word dynamite. A sign was a kind of miracle which represented or led people to believe in something else, ie the Gospel. A wonder is a miracle which shows itself to be outside the ordinary and would cause people to be amazed.

In the heavens above and signs on the earth below- Uses the language of creation to invoke the idea of a holistic change. Just as God made the entire world, so He would

bring about this amazing change everywhere. Another way of saying it would be that the changes would be evident "from top to bottom" when the Holy Spirit came.

Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke- All three of these were regarded as things that indicated God's presence and intervention in the world. However, after just receiving the positive news of the sending of the Spirit, this was focused more on the judgment for those who did not believe. These images are reminiscent of the plagues in Egypt, like God turning the Nile to blood or reigning fiery hailstones on Egypt.

20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood- As almost every human being on earth has figured out, the sun rises and sets every day without fail. The sun is essential for life to thrive on earth. Therefore, not being able to see the sun and for there to be only darkness was a terrifying experience. Although it didn't happen very often, they didn't know when the sun would return. During eclipses, many cultures would sacrifice and pray for the sun to return. During that time, a blood moon would often appear and be taken as a sign of judgment. Again, it shows us that there would be a top to bottom change from the way that things were before.

Before the day of the Lord comes- The day of the Lord most often refers to the second coming of Christ on the Last Day. Sometimes, in the Old Testament, it also referred to significant events in the history of God's people, but by the context, we can tell Peter is talking about the Last Day. On the Last Day, all the dead will be raised and there will be a judgment.

The great and magnificent day- In our modern Western culture, great most often means something positive. The same can be said for a synonym like the word "magnificent." However, the Last Day is not going to be something positive for every person, because many will have died without faith. Great can sometimes just mean "big" or "weighty." And no matter if you believe or not, the Last Day will be a big day. In the same way, something can be magnificent without being positive. Magnificent can mean elaborate and striking, instead of something that is beautiful. Believers will view the proceedings with awe and joy, while unbelievers will tremble in fear.

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

And it shall come to pass- A very Old Testament way of saying that something is going to happen. Emphasizes that this event and the forthcoming promise would take some time to be realized, but they would eventually happen. This phrase is often referring to the fulfilling of a prophecy or prediction or expectation.

That everyone- In the time of Joel, many Jews would not have taken the "everyone" literally. Most of them would have thought that those in Israel would be the only ones saved. Any suggestion to the contrary would have been shocking to them. However, God often speaks of both Jews and Gentiles being saved, even in the Old Testament. Pentecost was a significant step in God making this fully-known.

Who calls upon the name of the Lord- Here, calling is very similar to "crying out." Crying out is done in desperation, knowing that we are unworthy. On the Last Day, everyone will have a certain amount of fear, but those who trust in Christ will be able to call upon Him as their Lord. Recognizing Jesus as Lord means that He has power over us and also that he has the power to save us.

Shall be saved- In order to fully appreciate the word "saved" in the context of the Bible, we must remember what we are being saved from. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are being saved from sin, death, and Satan. On the Last Day, we will see the consequences of these things for unbelievers. We will see that the wages of sin is death and not only physical, temporal death, but eternal death in hell. On the other hand, we know that we have received forgiveness, life, and salvation, which we will spend with God in heaven.