

# The Book of Joel

## Part One:

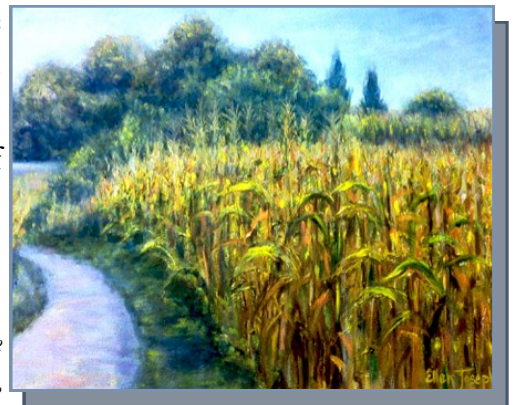
### Where's God's Meal ?



#### On Grandma's Porch

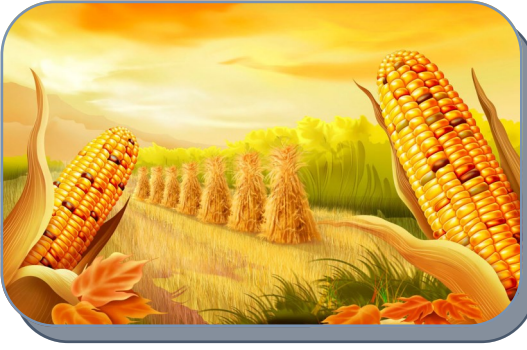
“There is no grain or wine to offer in the Temple;  
the priests mourn because they have no offerings for the LORD.  
The fields are bare; the ground mourns because the grain is destroyed,  
the grapes are dried up, and the olive trees are withered” (Joel 1:9-10 GNV).

For several months the Lord has been captivating my heart in the book of Joel. It began one morning in Iowa. It was the day before my Grandma's funeral. I was sitting on the porch of my Grandma's house having my morning coffee and reading the Bible. One side of the porch overlooks fields of corn. Those beautiful Iowa cornfields are a sight to behold, and I was enjoying the view that quiet, peaceful morning. As I reached for my Bible, it fell open to the book of Joel. My eyes landed upon the scripture in chapter one verse nine, *“The meal-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the*



*priests, the ones who minister to the Lord, are crying”.* The Holy Spirit immediately began to touch my heart with those words, “the meal-offering and drink-offering are cut off from the Lord”. I sensed that hidden in those words was a view into the heart and needs of the Lord that I had never before considered. I was touched by the sorrow expressed in those pages as I considered the priests (who daily ministered to the Lord) weeping on the empty altars because the Lord was going hungry. There was no provision to offer Him the meal and drink offerings because the fields were devoured by locusts. My heart was captivated by the picture that lay before me in these verses. I could feel the Holy Spirit beckoning me to press in to know and care for the Lord in a new way. And so my search began.

## What Is A Meal Offering?



Before I could continue my search in the Book of Joel I had to become better acquainted with the offerings that are referred to in this book. Once we understand the basic facts concerning these offerings, the Holy Spirit will be able to share the heart of Jesus with us in regards to what they spiritually represent. The meal and drink offerings were an essential part of worship in Israel. The meal and drink offerings come from the fruit of the harvest. Meal (*the KJV uses the word “meat”*) comes from the grain, and drink comes from the grapes. As the land yields its increase, God’s people would cook up a good meal and the priests would serve it to the Lord in His house (the Temple) upon the altar. God Himself would eat these offerings, consuming them through the flames upon the altar (Heb. 12:29). What an amazing thing! The meal offerings were included in many of the other offerings. Sometimes referred to as “food and drink” offerings, these gifts were an essential part of the “fellowship offerings” because they would bring God fellowship and communion. Both God and the priests would partake together of the increase of the harvest in those meal offerings. The people would prepare the bread in special ways to present it to God through the priest (Lev. Chapter 2). It was almost as if they were feeding God a good meal. These meal offerings were freely given and offered up all through the year and also on the “feast days” of Israel as part of the worship and celebration (Ex. 23:14-19, Deut.14:23). In fact, three times every year the people were to gather in Jerusalem to offer and feast. During these feasts they would share a “fellowship/peace” offering in which God, priest and the people would partake. Once again, I personally think these feast days were to be literal “feasts” where God and His people feasted on the harvest together. You would also find these food offerings present at special celebrations, such as the dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8:64-65). These feasts are based on the progression of the harvest which represents the increase of the Seed of Christ forming within us and bearing His fruit.

God made some distinctions when He shared His heart with Moses about how He wanted to be worshiped through the offerings (Lev. 1:1). God said that some offerings were required and everyone had to do them (such as the sin offerings), and other offerings were not required, but were to be given freely from the heart. Meal offerings were “free-will offerings” or “gifts” (“korban” in Hebrew). They were also called “sweet savor offerings” because their purpose was not just to perform a task (such as deal with sin and trespasses) but to bless the Lord with the sweet savor of His Son. In other words, these offerings were not just dealing with our problems (sins), but were freely given to bless and care for God’s needs.

## What Is The Spiritual Significance?

Before discussing the significance of these offerings in the book of Joel, let’s make sure we are clear on the spiritual meanings of these Old Testament types and shadows. New Testament scripture tells us that Old Testament scripture is explained and fulfilled through the Person of Christ Himself, in both His death for us and His Life in us (John 5:39, Luke 24:25-27). The feasts and offerings of Israel represent the flow of Christ’s Life in His body (Col.2:16-17). The fruit of the harvest field in

Israel represents the increase of Christ in us (Mat. 13:23. Gal. 3:16). We are His cultivated field, the branches that bear His fruit, and the vessels of His increase (Jn. 15:5, II Cor. 4:7). As Christ is formed in us and the fruit of His Divine Nature comes forth, the Lord receives a sweet savor of His Son, which is like the most delicious meal we could ever prepare for Him! Allowing Christ to grow in us and be fruitful through us is a true way to worship God and minister to His heart. Therefore, as we continue to focus on fields, harvests, and meal offerings... we are really speaking of Christ and the fruit of His life in us. To put it simply, Joel saw the people as God's field. In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus uses the same symbolism when He talks about the conditions of ground and the harvests they produce.

## The Condition of The Land

The book of Joel begins by describing a decimated field. Locusts and worms have eaten and destroyed everything. As I was reading that first chapter while sitting there on my Grandma's porch, I realized that I was surrounded with lush Iowa farmland and healthy crops while Joel was standing in the middle of a ravished field, utterly demolished with no hope of harvest and certainty of famine. In Joel's time, nothing had survived the plague of the locusts, not even the bark on the trees or the fruit of the vine. Any hope of harvest was gone, and therefore the tables were empty and the altars were bare. Not only had man lost provision to feed his own family, but lacked resources to offer up a meal and drink offering to God and food for the priests.

## One Man's Sensitivity



The amazing thing about Joel's response to the devastation around him was his sensitivity to how it all affected God. Most people would first consider themselves in light of an epidemic that robbed them of their food supply. But Joel's heart was broken over the Lord's empty altars. Joel saw the real famine was first in the hearts of the people who no longer took thought or care for God's needs, but instead for years had devoured the increase upon their own lusts. Selfishness will eventually devour everything, including the portion that belongs to God. "Thou shalt give to the Lord a portion of the increase of thy seed, that the field continue to bring forth year by year" (Deut. 14:22).

Instead of shaking a fist at God, or demanding help, Joel bowed down his heart and considered the Lord. Over and over again throughout the scriptures it is one person's sensitivity to God's needs that changed the course of history (I Sam. 1:11), ended a famine (I Kings 17:15-16), and started the process to give God a house (Ps. 132:4-5, I Kings 8:17). When just one heart turns from itself to God in love, big changes happen. Famines can turn to feasts when hearts turn from self to Jesus. Therefore Joel begins to cry out "wake-up" (verse 5) and "cry out" (verse 8). This "awakening" is not to the dire conditions in the earth, but a sensitizing to the heart of God, *"I was sleeping, but my heart is awakening as I hear the sound,*

*the sound of my love pounding at the door. Open to me, my sister, my love” (Canticles 5:2).* As our hearts awaken to Him, they begin to grieve over how He has been neglected and forgotten, *“Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth” (Joel 1:8).* A realization comes concerning the lack of caring for Him, through meal and drink offerings, and that causes the priests to spend all night crying on the empty altars.

## **The Need For A Break-through**

During the time of Joel the people needed some major break-throughs. Things had become desperate in the daily lives of all the people. Many may have felt the problem was the locusts and the need was better pesticides. Some theologians have interpreted the plague of locusts as a prophetic foreshadowing of the Babylonian armies that would eventually invade and destroy Jerusalem in 587 BC. In that view, some may consider the Babylonians the problem. But Joel saw past the crisis in the earth into the heart and needs of God. Joel found answers that went far beyond farming techniques and war tactics. Joel went straight to the heart of the matter and began crying out for God’s needs to be met. He cried out for the people to gather together to seek the Lord and minister to Him. To some that may have seemed foolish in light of all the problems and issues they were facing. But to those who love God, the real issue is HIM, and everything else is secondary.

*(This article to be continued...)*

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