

Session 7 Military Invasions in God's End-Time Plan

¹*Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: ²a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. ³A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. ⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. ⁵With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. ⁶Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. ⁷They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. ⁸They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. ⁹They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. (Joel 2:1-9)*

I. MOSES' PREDICTIONS OF TROUBLE IN ISRAEL

- A. Moses prophesied that horrifying things would come to Israel if they rebelled against God. He spoke of locust plagues that would be sent by God (Deut. 28:28-42). This occurred in Joel's day, yet the people refused to believe that God had sent it. Moses foretold that the Lord would bring a military invasion by a nation from afar (the Babylonians) against Israel (Deut. 28:47-52), and that they would take ownership of all of Israel's gates and devastate the land. Moses prophesied that Israel would give way to cannibalism during the sieges (Deut. 28:52-53).
- B. The Babylonian invasion occurred (606–586 BC) in three stages, probably within a few decades after Joel's ministry. The Lord warned Israel that He would scatter them across the nations, from one end of the earth to the other (Deut. 28:64). This was fulfilled in part on several occasions when Gentile nations invaded Israel and deported them as prisoners to foreign lands. The three main examples in Israel's history were the Assyrian invasion (722 BC), the Babylonian invasion (606–586 BC), and the invasion by the army of the Roman Empire (70 AD).
⁶⁴"The LORD will scatter you among all peoples [all nations], from one end of the earth to the other...⁶⁵And among those nations you shall find no rest...but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul." (Deut. 28:64-65)
- C. This prophecy by Moses will see its ultimate fulfillment in the end times (Ps. 102:20; Isa. 11:11-14, 16; 14:1-3; 19:23; 27:12-13; 40:11; 42:7, 16, 22; 45:14; 49:9-12, 21, 24-26; 60:10, 12, 14; 61:1, 5; Jer. 30:3, 8, 10, 17; 31:16, 23; Ezek. 39:23-29; Hos. 11:11; Joel 3:1-2, 8; Amos 9:14; Mic. 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:6; 7:12; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 10:10-11; 13:8; 14:2; Mt. 25:43; Lk. 21:24). Jesus will free Jewish captives from Egypt and Assyria (parts of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan; as seen in Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 5:6; 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11).
- D. By understanding the basic principles related to the Babylonian invasion as seen in Joel 2, we are equipped to gain more understanding about end-time military invasions and captivity.

II. PROPHETIC VOICES DECLARING MILITARY INVASION

- A. Military invasions and conflicts are a part of God's plan to shake and judge nations.

⁴³*"For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴and level you, and your children within you, to the ground...because you did not know the time of your visitation."* (Lk. 19:43-44)

⁶*"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... ⁸All these are the beginning of sorrows."* (Mt. 24:6-8)

- B. In Luke 21:20-24, Jesus prophesied of a future military invasion of Israel, which happened at the hands of the Roman Empire in 70 AD, but also has a double fulfillment at the end of the age. He was describing two events. This prophecy had a “near” fulfillment, occurring within one generation, and a “far-off” fulfillment in the end times. One principle of biblical prophecy is that God often intends two fulfillments in one prophecy—a near fulfillment and an end-time fulfillment.

²⁰*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near...²²For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled...²⁴And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* (Lk. 21:20-24)

²*I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity...³Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations...⁴And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...* (Zech. 14:2-5)

- C. In Revelation, John prophesied military invasions in God's end-time plan. He saw Jesus open the seals. With the breaking of the second seal, John saw a red horse, whose rider was granted to take peace from the earth, so that people would kill one another in war. It escalated in the fourth seal, resulting in people being killed by the sword (Rev. 6:8). One-fourth of the population of the entire planet will die in the wake of these military crises and their results.

⁴*It was granted to the one who sat on it [red horse] to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword...* (Rev. 6:4)

⁸*Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword...* (Rev. 6:8)

- D. Paul warns us of end-time military conflicts, saying that when the nations say, “Peace and safety,” then sudden destruction will come (1 Thes. 5:3). In other words, when the nations think that an hour of peace has finally come, it will suddenly be disrupted by war.

³*For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.* (1 Thes. 5:3)

- E. The OT prophets, as well as Jesus, Paul, and John, all prophesied end-time military conflicts.

III. THE END-TIME MILITARY INVASION

- A. The Babylonian invasion was the most terrible military crisis for Israel in the Old Testament. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (modern-day Iraq) attacked Israel with three massive invasions over a twenty-year period, leaving the nation utterly decimated.
 - 1. The three waves of the invasion were in 606 BC, 597 BC, and 586 BC, thus occurring over twenty years. In other words, this one judgment took twenty years to come to pass.
 - 2. Joel may have prophesied this ten or twenty years before the first wave occurred. Why? I assume that Joel's prophecy about this invasion occurred within the lifetime of those he called to fast and pray for it to be averted.
- B. One principle of biblical prophecy is that God often intends two fulfillments in one prophecy—a near fulfillment and an end-time fulfillment.
- C. The military invasion against Israel prophesied in Joel 2:1-9 will find its complete fulfillment in the end times. It is also prophesied in Zechariah 12-14 and will be the most severe attack in Israel's history.

IV. BLOW THE TRUMPET! LET ALL THE INHABITANTS TREMBLE

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: ²A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. (Joel 2:1-2)

- A. The Lord introduced a terrifying military invasion with a cry to sound the alarm and blow the trumpet on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. It is a call to wake up the people so that they would repent and cry out to God to intervene with mercy (Joel 2:12-14).
- B. Zion is the city of Jerusalem. It also represents the people of God. The trumpet is blown to call the people of God.
- C. This command to sound the alarm has an application today in God's servants raising their voices, so that all the inhabitants in the land would hear and tremble.

⁶If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it? ⁷Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:6-7)

- 1. The trumpet alarms the people that a great emergency or crisis is at hand. In His mercy, God tells His messengers to sound the alarm so that His people can respond.
- 2. The call to blow the trumpet is a prophetic call requiring boldness and courage. We need preaching that produces trembling. It has never been popular.
- 3. If God gives a warning of coming judgment to a prophetic watchman and the watchman does not blow the trumpet, then the blood of the people is on the hands of that watchman.

⁶*“If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.” (Ezek. 33:6)*

4. God’s end-time trumpet messengers are forerunners.
- D. The desired result of this trumpet sound is that the people—all the inhabitants of the earth, believers and unbelievers—would *tremble*. The end-time message has an element of warning that is so alarming that, when understood, both the hearers and the proclaimers will tremble.

V. A DAY OF DARKNESS

²*A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness... (Joel 2:2)*

- A. Joel describes this day in frightening language, using four different words: darkness, gloominess, clouds, and thick darkness. These convey how ominous and overwhelming the coming judgment is. It will be a day of gloom to those who continue to rebel against God.
- B. The end-time expression of this darkness is related to the Antichrist’s military invasion of Israel.
- C. Some say, “I don’t like doom and gloom” because they see it as a contradiction to God’s love. Doom and gloom is God’s language. It is His mercy to speak clearly about what is coming.

VI. THE COMING ARMY: LIKE MORNING CLOUDS

²*...like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong... (Joel 2:2)*

- A. Joel compares the coming army to morning clouds or the dawning of a sunrise. In what way was the Babylonian invasion like the sunrise? It was sure to come and no one escaped seeing it!
 1. In some translations, this phrase *like the morning clouds* qualifies the first description of Joel 2:2—the day of darkness and gloominess.
 2. In other translations it describes the latter part of Joel 2:2—the militant people growing great and strong, *like the morning clouds*.
 3. I believe this phrase qualifies *both* the day of gloom and the army. For either way, the overarching principle remains the same. A day of darkness is going to encompass Israel and the whole earth, like morning clouds encompass the mountains.

- B. Another analogy to the morning sunrise is that the intensity of the light increases gradually. As the hours go by, the sun grows until it fills the horizon and ultimately shines intensely as the noon-day sun. Just as God brings forth the morning progressively rather than all at once, so that day of gloom grew stronger and stronger. The progressive nature was seen in the three waves of the Babylonian invasion that broke out suddenly and then gradually increased in intensity over twenty years. Joel's point is that the day of gloom will be all-consuming by the time it comes into fullness. As the morning clouds spread over the mountains and as the sun arises, the wicked Babylonian army was sure to come in the near future in a way that all would see.

VII. A PEOPLE GREAT AND STRONG

²Like the morning clouds...a people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. (Joel 2:2)

- A. Joel continues to describe the army that would attack Jerusalem. It was to be unsurpassed in size, might, and in fierceness. In the end times, all nations will gather against Jerusalem (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Zeph. 3:8; Ezek. 38:4; Rev. 16:13-14; 19:17-21). It will be the largest military gathering in all of human history.

²"I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat [near Jerusalem] and I will enter into judgment with them there." (Joel 3:2)

- B. The army will be great—greatness is due to numerical strength; they will come in vast numbers.
- C. The army will be strong—strong in military sophistication, advanced technology, and the highest levels of biological and chemical warfare. It is mighty in economics and with demonic miracles.
1. They will have economic strength (Rev. 13:17).

¹⁷That no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark... (Rev. 13:17)

2. Their strength will also be in occult power.

¹³He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do... (Rev. 13:13-14)

- D. The Antichrist will use demonic signs and wonders.
- E. Joel describes this force as the northern army coming from Babylon (Joel 2:20). Jeremiah prophesied that an army would come from the north (Jer. 3:18; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8). A coalition of evil nations led by the Antichrist will come against Israel from the north (Ezek. 38-39).
- ²⁰"I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land...his stench [from so many of his dead soldiers] will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things." (Joel 2:20)*
- F. This will be a people the like of whom the world has never seen (Joel 2:2). This army will be unprecedented in its fierceness, its size, and its strength.

- G. An invasion and attack on Israel of this magnitude would not be seen again for many successive generations, in other words, not until the millennial rebellion (Rev. 20:7-9).

VIII. A FIRE DEVOURS BEFORE THEM

³A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. (Joel 2:3)

- A. Unprecedented desolation will result from raging fires that will precede and follow the terrible army that invades Jerusalem. This happened in the Babylonian and Roman invasions, and it will happen again at the end of the age. The land of Israel was like the “Garden of Eden,” because it was plush and fruitful. It became as a desolate wilderness after being invaded.
- B. Joel prophesied that fires would rage before and after the military invasion. When the Nazis attacked Russia, they bombed the land ahead of time to destroy all resistance. When they retreated from the eastern front in the Ukraine and Russia, they burned much in their “scorched earth” policy. They did this so that their enemy could not use the resources from that land.
- C. The condition of the desolate cities of Europe and Asia after WWII gives us a graphic picture of many desolate cities at the end of the Tribulation (Lev. 26:31-32; Ps. 46:8; Isa. 13:6, 9; 24:1-3, 6, 12, 16; 25:2; 27:10; 34:2, 10; 42:15, 24; 44:26; 49:8-9, 17, 19, 26; 51:3, 19; 52:9; 54:3; 58:12; 59:10; 60:12, 18; 61:4; 62:4; Jer. 30:16; 33:10-12; 49:2, 13, 20, 33; 50:3; 51:26; Ezek. 32:15; 33:28-29; 35:3-9, 14-15; 36:3-5, 10, 33-38; 38:12-13; 39:10; Dan. 9:27; 12:7; Joel 2:20; 3:19; Amos 9:11, 14; Mic. 7:13; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 2:8; 14:2, 11; Mt. 22:7; Lk. 19:43-44; 21:20-24; 1 Thes. 5:3; Rev. 8:9; 17:16; 18:19).

IX. THEIR APPEARANCE LIKE HORSES

⁴Their appearance is like...horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. ⁵With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. ⁶Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. (Joel 2:4-6)

- A. **Speed and appearance:** The advancing army was like horses that run like swift steeds; Joel expressed their military advance using the language of his own day. He painted a terrifying scene. Joel was speaking of an army unmatched in speed.
 1. Hitler conquered Poland in three weeks. He conquered France in four weeks. He conquered the Netherlands in less than two weeks!
 2. This same swiftness will characterize the Antichrist’s army. In a time when men say, “Peace! Peace!” suddenly this evil empire will arise in fierceness (1 Thes. 5:3)!
- B. **Sounds:** The sound of the army is like chariots leaping on mountain tops and like raging fire. Imagine the deafening noise of ten thousand chariots charging through the land. Then imagine the sound of raging forest fires and bonfires in the grass. These sounds of war were terrifying.

- C. **Devastation on Jerusalem:** The faces of those who see the advancing army are filled with fear. Their faces are drained of color, becoming ghostly white in fear at the sight of this army. They writhe in pain even before a hand is laid upon them. Their bodies are gripped with terror.
- D. The sheer sight and sound of their enemy sent them into utter dread. Joel describes Jewish victims in Jerusalem before the Babylonian invasion; their faces are drained of color as their bodies are gripped with terror. Similarly, some will faint for fear in the end-time crisis.
²⁶*“...men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.” (Lk. 21:26)*

X. MEN OF WAR

⁷They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. ⁸They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. ⁹They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. (Joel 2:7-9)

- A. This prophecy of a total assault on Jerusalem by Babylon had a “near” fulfillment in Joel’s day. The Antichrist’s armies will do this again in Jerusalem as a “far” fulfillment in the end times.
- B. They are a zealous and fierce army: They run like mighty men of war and overcome the walls.
- C. They are a disciplined army that marches in formation without breaking ranks! They are trained, disciplined, and seasoned. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column.
- D. They are a courageous army: In the heat of battle, they lunge courageously between the weapons instead of retreating in fear!
- E. They are an invincible or unstoppable army: They run to and fro in the city, they run on the wall; no obstacle will stop them in their assault. No resistance except divine intervention will stop them. The Babylonian army was not stopped by the walls of Jerusalem. The Antichrist’s army will be unstoppable until the Lord comes to deliver Israel (Zech. 14:1-5).
- F. They are an invasive army: They climb into the houses; they enter at the windows like a thief.

XI. ALL CREATION WILL BE IMPACTED BY THE TERRORS OF THIS DAY

¹⁰The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. ¹¹The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:10-11)

- A. Supernatural demonstrations will precede and follow the Antichrist’s army. The earth and the heavens will shake, the sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will fade in brightness. The entire atmosphere will tremble, including the sky and the solar system! This is not figurative—it is literal and it will come to pass.

- B. Why does God speak of cosmic signs in the same passage as the evil army in Joel 2:1-9? The message God is giving through these wonders is that He is in full control. He has power over the Antichrist's army to accomplish His purposes. God gives a heavenly power display in the hour that a wicked army is trampling the globe in order to reveal that the earthly armies are nothing to Him. Effortlessly, He causes the sun to lose its light! (Acts 2:19-20; Rev. 6:12; Mt. 24:29; Mk. 13:24; Lk. 21:25).
- C. The military crisis results in the demonstration of God's power in the heavens. The theme of the Babylonian invasion in Joel's day and the Antichrist's assault on rebellious nations flows into the theme of God's cosmic judgments (the most severe end-time judgments). God is saying, "I have power over all armies and the sun and stars. I have all power on earth and in heaven."
- D. The Lord gives voice—He gives direction as the One leading His armies.
- E. Evil nations can be used as a rod in His hand to discipline other evil nations (Isa. 10:5)! God does not cause them to be evil, yet He employs them to discipline other nations. God will raise up the Antichrist to discipline Israel and the Gentile nations who are in disobedience to Him. The Babylonian invasion did not surprise God, nor will the Antichrist.
- F. Why does God use these cosmic signs? With these extraordinary manifestations, God will declare to those who love Him, "Do not fear, I am in total control!" (Lk. 21:25-28).
 - 1. Through these cosmic signs, God demonstrates His full awareness of everything going on. Every detail has been orchestrated. He has authority over the stars in the heavens. God's statement through the shifting of these solar powers is that He is in control.
 - 2. The Church will be assured of His power on their behalf. He has the power to move the stars in the heavens and He can keep His own through this strategic hour of history.

²⁵*"To whom then will you liken Me... "* ²⁶*Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host [stars] by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power... (Isa. 40:25-26)*

 - 3. If God can administrate the heavenly realm with such power and wisdom, we can rest assured that He can also direct the earthly realm. It is easy for God to overpower all earthly armies, whether they are from ancient Babylon or the armies of the Antichrist.

¹⁵*The nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales...* ¹⁷*All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. (Isa. 40:15-17)*

XII. GOD IS WORKING OUT HIS GREAT PLAN ON EARTH

¹¹*The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)*

- A. Joel describes this evil camp as very strong; when the Lord puts his hand upon any vessel, whether righteous or unrighteous, and says, “I have need of you,” they are unstoppable for that season! His purpose is inescapable, for strong is the One who executes His word. In other words, mighty is the God who fulfills His plan. The Lord gives voice—He gives direction as the One leading His armies. His army was the Babylonian army in Joel’s day. They were *His army* in the sense that they fulfilled His purpose. They were His instrument to discipline rebellious Israel. The Lord *Himself* brings this vile army into power and provides direction before them to fulfill His purposes. He is responsible for using them to make an impact upon His people.
 - 1. The One who gave the prophetic scriptures will reveal His might by fulfilling the word of prophecy. The Lord declares that His camp is very great and He is the strong God who is executing His Word. He is the One fulfilling His eternal plan as declared by the prophets. His plan will be fulfilled precisely!
 - 2. Babylon did not disrupt God’s plans and the Antichrist will not thwart them.
- B. The Day of the Lord is great and very terrible (Joel 2:11). The end-time drama will be intense and dreadful. The two sides of the coming Day are the glory and the terror.
- C. Joel asks, “Who can endure this intense drama?” or “Who can survive this Day in God’s favor?” The answer is, we can! Joel gave us the way to find God’s favor in a time of crisis (Joel 2:12-17).
- D. When this question is asked in relation to the end times, it refers to enduring the military crisis caused by the Antichrist’s reign of terror, God’s cosmic judgments, and Jesus’ second coming.

Session 8 The Necessity of Day-of-the-Lord Preachers

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand. (Joel 2:1)

XIII. PREACHING THAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO TREMBLE

- A. The Day-of-the-Lord preaching is to alarm God's people and cause their hearts to tremble.
 - 1. In this context, *to alarm* means to agitate or disorientate people by the preaching of the end times.
 - 2. To tremble: To cause their hearts to be engaged with God in the fear of God
- B. When was the last time you *heard* a sermon that caused your spirit to tremble in the presence of God? Or, when was the last time you preached a message that made people tremble?
 - 1. There are many messages today that make people rejoice—and that is good. We must continually declare the message of God's unrelenting kindness that produces rejoicing.
 - 2. We also need the kind of trumpet-sound that causes trembling in the hearts of men. Just as Joel proclaimed the judgments of God and the great and terrible Day, the Lord will raise up forerunner messengers to trumpet the kind of message that causes alarm at the end of the age.

XIV. DAY-OF-THE-LORD PREACHERS

- A. God is commissioning men and women all over the earth to sound the prophetic alarm to others. Preaching that causes men to tremble comes from standing in the counsel of the Lord and hearing His Word, and then proclaiming it (Jer. 23:18).
- B. Joel was a ***Day-of-the-Lord prophetic preacher*** used by the Lord to prepare all who would hear the word about the Babylonian invasion. Joel's generation was unique in Israel's history. He more than declared future things—he proclaimed the imminent Day of the Lord.
- C. The Lord will raise up ***Day-of-the-Lord prophetic preachers*** like Joel, with the anointing that causes alarm and trembling in the hearts of men. These preachers will be both men and women, young and old. They will proclaim both the *great* and *terrible* aspects of the Day of the Lord.
- D. It takes the power of the Spirit to cause men to tremble (Jn. 16:8). It takes much more than eloquence or good communication skills. Alarming preaching has never been popular preaching.
- E. Day-of-the-Lord preachers may not be popular among the masses, but they will change history.

- F. Some assume that God was a “God of wrath” in the Old Testament and that He is a “God of mercy” in the New Testament. But God never changes (Mal. 3:6). He was as merciful in the Old Testament as He is in the New, and as strong against sin in the New Testament as in the Old.
- G. Day-of-the-Lord preaching declares: “***The Day of the Lord is at hand!***” People accept the idea that the Day of the Lord is in the distant future. To say “the Day of the Lord is at hand” means that it is not for a future generation but for the generation alive at the time.

XV. PREACHING THAT PRODUCES TREMBLING

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming... (Joel 2:1)

- A. Day-of-the-Lord prophetic preaching causes the heart to tremble for three reasons.
- B. First, people tremble with **anguish** over the magnitude of the trouble that a national crisis can bring. Jeremiah trembled with **compassionate anguish** over the pain that people might go through (Jer. 8:18-9:2; 14:17-18; 23:9-10). Judgment preaching is never to be done without tears.
- C. Second, some tremble as they consider the **persecution** they may receive because of their preaching. Jeremiah trembled over the persecution he received because he preached on judgment (Jer. 20:7).
- D. Third, people become **awestruck** before the majesty of God’s power in considering the coming revival and judgment. Throughout church history, as people like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney preached with power, their hearers were pierced with the revelation of God.
- E. Trembling that comes from prophetic preaching produces a desire to walk out the fasted lifestyle. Prophetic preaching creates urgency to take hold of grace to fast and pray (Joel 2:12-17).

XVI. THE OFFENSIVENESS OF DAY-OF-THE-LORD PREACHING

- A. Forerunners must preach both the positive and negative aspects of the Day of the Lord—a year of favor and a day of vengeance. The day of vengeance is part of the full counsel of God.
- B. Many will be offended at the end-time message, causing them to be filled with rage against God.
¹⁸***The nations were angry and Your wrath has come.*** (Rev. 11:18)
- C. The nations will be drunk with anger against Jesus’ end-time anger revealed in His judgments.
⁶***I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk...*** (Isa. 63:6)

I. THE “OFFENSIVENESS” OF JESUS

¹⁰*“Then many will be offended...” (Mt. 24:10)*

⁶*Jesus said... “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (Mt. 11:6)*

- A. Many will be offended by Jesus’ leadership when He comes to judge. He will separate those who truly want Him from those who do not. He will cause the real desires and thoughts of the human heart to come to the surface in the context of His “offensive” judgments.
- B. Jesus often offends our minds in order to reveal our hearts. In other words, He acts in a way that offends our natural thinking, knowing that it will cause the true motives and desires in our hearts to come to the surface. In other words, any who really desire a relationship with Him will press into Him for more understanding during the times when their minds cannot understand what is happening. At the same time, He gives opportunities to those who do not really want a relationship with Him to refuse His leadership; He does this by letting them see things that offend their understanding.
- C. For example, in the temple, Jesus turned over the money tables (Jn. 2:15-20). This offended many who wanted to know by what authority He did such a thing. Jesus responded, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn. 2:18-19). Though He was speaking of His own body, He left people thinking that He was talking about the temple that took forty-six years to build! He purposely offended their understanding in order to cause what was in their hearts towards Him to come to the surface. This gave a good excuse for rejecting Him if any were looking for one.
- D. Undoubtedly, even some of the disciples were offended at what Jesus did in the temple that day. In the midst of it, they had to wrestle with the truth that Jesus was God and, therefore, that His wisdom was far superior to theirs.
- E. Jesus said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (Jn. 6:53). This was a hard saying for them to understand. Many of the disciples left Jesus that day, considering that His doctrine was wrong. Peter responded, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68).

II. THE ROLE OF THE FORERUNNER

- A. God wants voluntary lovers; that is, He wants people to *choose* to say yes to Him. God raised up John the Baptist to prepare the way before Jesus’ first coming. John was a forerunner, a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

⁴*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD.” (Lk. 3:4)*
- B. God is raising up men and women, old and young, who will have a forerunner ministry like John the Baptist. They will prepare the way for Jesus’ second coming.
- C. John was a voice crying out with authority. John had deep revelation of God in his spirit.

- D. The people must understand God's heart and His purposes in His end-time plans.
- E. Forerunners will proclaim Jesus as the Bridegroom God. John the Baptist referred to himself as a friend of the Bridegroom because he understood Jesus as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29).

²⁹*"The friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled." (Jn. 3:29)*
- F. John rejoiced greatly because he experienced Jesus as a Bridegroom. John's forerunner message and lifestyle was energized by encountering Jesus as the Bridegroom God.

III. SEVEN COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO END-TIME PROPHECY

- A. Common misconception 1: Since we are not able to know the *day or hour* of Jesus' return, we should not try to know the *generation* in which He returns. Jesus connected the timing of His return to events and trends. Jesus and Paul emphasized the knowability of the generation of Jesus' return, by observing the biblical signs of the times (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11). There is one generation that will see all the signs prophesied by Jesus (Mt. 24:33). As these trends accelerate simultaneously on a global level, making headline news, we are to understand that we are in a unique season in history leading to Jesus' return.
- B. Common misconception 2: Every generation has believed that they were the last generation. The fact is that believers in the first century were the only generation in history in which the majority of God's people maintained that they would see the return of Jesus in their lifetime. It is true that a very small number of believers in other generations may have held to this belief, but I doubt that it was more than one percent in any other generation. Some may have emphasized the soon return of the Lord after a crisis occurred, but that emphasis did not last.
- C. Common misconception 3: No one can understand these prophecies because they are too complicated, so why even try? The Spirit gave the Scripture, including the book of Revelation, to be understood by all who love Jesus. We do not need a doctorate in theology to understand its basic message. The majority of people throughout history were uneducated. Yet God intended for them to understand the Scriptures, including Revelation. Revelation is to be interpreted in its plain meaning. The events and numbers are to be understood literally unless the scripture indicates that they are symbolic (Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9, 15-18, etc.).
- D. Common misconception 4: Emphasizing the end times causes us to minimize our work in the kingdom. This is a criticism directed against the escapist and defeatist mentality of some who believe in the pretribulation rapture, and who conclude that they need not work hard to transform the culture since the Antichrist will take over society anyway. However, there is continuity between *our* labors and victories in society *before* He returns and the victories that *He* will establish *after* He returns. It will all work together as one seamless plan. We will experience great advancements of God's kingdom on the earth even before Jesus returns.

- E. Common misconception 5: Teaching on the end times creates a doom and gloom view. The truth is that the doom and gloom in the book of Revelation will come on the Antichrist's empire, which will oppress the nations. The end-time message is filled with hope; the return of Jesus is called the blessed hope (Titus 2:13). Jesus is coming to rule all the nations, and His judgments will remove all that hinders love, including all oppression. All nations will live in the joy of God's manifest presence with unprecedented prosperity, righteousness, and goodness. The earth will be healed as the land, water, and atmosphere are fully cleansed (Rom. 8:19-23). Jesus' end-time plan reveals the necessary preparation for the cleansing and restoration of the earth and all aspects of society.
- F. Common misconception 6: God's judgments in the book of Revelation come on the saints. The truth is that God's judgments come on the Antichrist's empire, not on the saints. The Church's greatest victory will occur in the generation in which Jesus returns. As Moses partnered with God to release judgment on Pharaoh by prayer (Ex. 7-12), so the Church will partner with Jesus in prayer, as He releases judgments on the Antichrist's empire. This will only happen in the final 3½ years of this age.
- G. Common misconception 7: It will all pan out in the end. The question is, will it pan out well for you and your loved ones? It will only go well for those who are prepared. We must prepare our children with right understanding of the unique dynamics that will occur in that hour.

IV. SEVEN REASONS WHY WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE END TIMES

- A. ***Certainty of victory:*** The Church will be victorious in love and power during the most dramatic time in history. This certainty prepares the Church to participate in the coming revival instead of giving up or drawing back. It is worth the effort because the Church will be victorious. Our lives and labors matter and will prevail. We will gain courage when we see end-time prophecy fulfilled before our eyes, but we must understand the prophecy before we can discern its fulfillment. When we understand, we are encouraged, because we know that God is in control and that He cares for us. This gives us courage to proclaim the message to others.
- B. ***Confidence in sovereignty:*** God is fully in control of the end-time crisis and is never surprised. The result of this is that we can live in peace, instead of making decisions in the coming crisis based on fear and panic. We will not see clearly with the smoke of fear and panic in our eyes.
- C. ***Continuity:*** Understanding the dynamic continuity between our present character and works in the age to come is vital. We see this continuity in the teaching about the Great Tribulation and the millennial kingdom.
- D. ***Fascination:*** We are to be fascinated with the revelation of the beauty of Jesus (Isa. 4:2; 28:5; 33:17) as we see His leadership (love, wisdom, and power) in His dramatic plans for the end times. Jesus will combine human free will, satanic rage, and God's sovereignty to produce the great harvest and the victorious Church, without ever violating God's justice or man's free will. The more we understand about Jesus' leadership in the end times, the more we are fascinated with Him.

- E. **Direction:** Having a compass in a storm at sea is a matter of life and death. Understanding the end times helps us to have right expectations for the future, which will include victory and hardship. With understanding, we are adequately braced for what is coming and, thus, are emotionally and mentally prepared to endure the glory and the pressure. We make right choices now because we have a right vision (expectancy) for life during this historic time. With understanding, we are warned and have discernment of what seductions to avoid and what not to do. For example, we must resist all persuasion to take the mark of the Beast and to participate in the seemingly prosperous economic and religious enterprises of Babylon the great harlot. The prophetic Church will be the light of truth in the darkest hour of history. God will raise up forerunners as part of His mercy for others.
- F. **Urgency:** With understanding of the end-time scriptures, we grow in faith that our intercession will minimize evil and increase victory in specific geographic areas (Joel 2:12-18). Our prayers can change history and lead many to salvation and a place of protection. Understanding produces in us an urgency to live a life of prayer and to cultivate spiritual depth (going deep in understanding the end times). Moses' prayers released and stopped God's judgments (Ex. 7-12).
- G. **Confidence to study:** As we grasp the truths of the end times, we have confidence and zeal to go deeper in our study of end-time passages. One of the biggest hindrances today is the conclusion that end-time prophecy is too difficult to understand, which leads some to think, "Why even try?"