

What the Lord Is Saying about the Crisis in Our Nation (Joel 2)

I. RECEIVING INSTRUCTION FROM THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. The Psalm 2 crisis requires a Joel 2 response, resulting in an Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit.

We are living in a very significant hour of human history. I am talking about the whole of human history. We are approaching, and I believe are in the beginning of, an hour that is going to see events, positive and negative, that will continue to escalate over the next several decades—maybe longer, maybe shorter. I do not know. Maybe shorter. Maybe longer. Nobody knows—that will lead to the coming of the Lord.

It is interesting that there is more in the Bible about one generation of history than any other generation. That is the generation that the Lord returns. It is my opinion—it is not a prophecy. It is not a revelation. It is an opinion that I feel strongly about—that we are in the early days of that generation. If that is true, then what the Bible says is going to happen will continue to intensify, both the positives and the negatives. The reason I believe we are in the early years of that generation is because of the biblical signs of the times. There are many things that Jesus said, the prophets said, and the apostles said that are happening for the first time. Most of them are happening for the first time on a global level, and they are recognizable. Not all of them, but most of them are. This is a new phenomenon. We are supposed to understand that when those things begin to happen and unfold in a more intensified way, we are in an hour of history that is unique from all other hours of history.

On Sunday night, the first night of the conference, I talked about the escalating crisis that is taking place. It is escalating rapidly. We saw it in Psalm 2. The kings of the earth and the leaders of the culture, the leaders of society, not just in America—we can see it clearly in America—but across the nations are wanting to remove the influence of the Word of God out of culture completely. They do not want God's standards. They do not want God's salvation. They do not want Jesus' leadership.

The Father revealed to King David in Psalm 2—I am not going to go through that again—that He was very displeased by this development in society and that He would not be silent, but He would break in with power. He is angry at the escalating of the moral darkness. He is not neutral; He is angry about it. That anger is not a contradiction to His tender love. As a matter of fact, it is an expression of that love. He is saying, "I am going to do something about the moral darkness. I am going to do something about the resistance to My Son and His leadership." One of the most glorious things He is going to do is pour out His Spirit in an ever-increasing way. We are seeing that on a global level right now.

*I want you to notice a very simple sentence, and I want to encourage you to learn this simple sentence in paragraph A. Say it with me. **The Psalm 2 crisis requires a Joel 2 response, resulting in an Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit.** I have said this sentence many times. The Psalm 2 crisis means the leaders of society, the leaders of culture, are promoting darkness, lies, and deception more and more, and they are coming against Jesus' leadership. The Psalm 2 crisis requires a Joel 2 response. That is what we are going to look at tonight. It results in an Acts 2 outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That outpouring of the Spirit began on the day of Pentecost, but, beloved, there is a greater measure. There is a greater scope of that outpouring that the Bible describes very clearly. We are seeing the escalation and increase of that as well.*

The dark is getting darker, but the light is getting lighter. Jesus said the wheat and the tares would mature together at the end of the age. I am often asked, "Is it going to get better or is it going to get worse." The answer is, "Yes, both." There is going to be greater perversion and darkness in society like no other time in history. That escalation is going rapidly. I am looking at just the last four or five years. The pace is increasing remarkably. I have been a pastor for forty years. I have been paying attention to the moral darkness in society

very closely for forty years. I would say many would agree, if not all, that the increase of darkness has been so rapid the last four or five years. Those of you who are younger may not have a frame of reference of how remarkable in a negative way this is.

The Joel 2 crisis. The promotion of darkness and lies against Jesus' leadership. Beloved, that darkness is being echoed by many in the church. It is popular. Many in the church—I am not saying most, but millions and millions—are standing with the popular tide of culture. They are embracing and echoing the lies, and they are promoting the darkness. They are even calling it the love of God and finding Bible verses to back up that dark posture of heart. It is a big crisis. Let's read it again. The Psalm 2 crisis requires a Joel 2 response. That is tonight. We are going to look at that. It is going to result in an Acts 2 greater outpouring of the Spirit. Because the Spirit has already been poured out, I am talking about a greater historic breakthrough of power.

Here in America we have had two great awakenings. One in the 1700s and one in the 1800s where the power of God was released in such manifested glory that whole cities were aware of the presence of God in their city. I mean people were converted driving down the road. People were weeping and rushing into churches to hear the Word of God. When the presence of God is manifest in geographic areas in those kinds of historic ways, unprecedented numbers come to the Lord. The church embraces a new level of purity and wholeheartedness to the Lord.

We have had two great awakenings in America. We did not have one in the twentieth century. We had some different moves of God in a certain way, but not a great awakening like I described. Some nations in their history have seen a great awakening. Beloved, there is going to be a third great awakening coming to America. There is going to be a global awakening as well. I do not mean where a few thousand get saved. I am believing God for 400,000 new converts in Kansas City which is a city—the whole metro area—of about two million people. Three or four hundred thousand new converts is what I am absolutely convinced is going to happen. In a city like New York—let's say fifteen million people, I believe there will two, three, four million new converts. I believe there will be those kinds of numbers in the cities across the earth.

I encourage you to learn this simple sentence in paragraph A. I use it all the time when I am talking to church leaders. I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of governmental leaders, leaders in our national and state government. I like to say this phrase to them. There is a Psalm 2 crisis. Then I go through Psalm 2, and they say, "Yeah, that is pretty obvious."

Then I say, "There is a Joel 2 response God is looking for." We go to Joel 2. Then I say, "There is an Acts 2 outpouring that is going to be the result." It is a very simple statement. I want to encourage you to use it. I want to encourage you to buy into it and share it.

- B. The Spirit is calling the Church to *understand* the coming revival and crisis and to *respond* in the way that Scripture teaches. God requires the response outlined in the book of Joel (2:12-17). We are to turn to God with all of our heart and pray for a great outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-31).

¹"**Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble...**"¹¹**For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?**

¹²**'Now, therefore,' says the LORD, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning'...**¹⁵**Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly...**

²⁸**And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...**³⁰**I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth...**³¹**before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.**" (Joel 2:1-31)

The Holy Spirit is calling the church to understand what the Bible says about the coming revival and the coming crisis. Did you know there are over 150 chapters in the Bible that describe the positive and the negative in the generation the Lord returns? One hundred and fifty chapters. If you add up the chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you have eighty-nine chapters, almost ninety. There are almost twice as many chapters in the Bible about the generation the Lord returns, almost twice as many as are about the generation He came the first time. Same Bible. Same Jesus. Same Holy Spirit. The Lord wants us to be familiar with those passages. A lot of very important information is in those 150 chapters. You might ask, “Where are those chapters?” We have a list of them on our website if you want to begin to look at them.¹

I believe we are in the early days. We might be three, four, five decades out, maybe a little bit longer, maybe a little bit shorter. Nobody knows. The signs of the times are increasing globally so discernibly, so recognizably. I look at it and say, “The Bible says the crisis is going to intensify, but the Bible also says the glory is going to intensify.” God wants us to understand the response He is looking for. God is not neutral about how He wants us to respond. He really cares about what we do at the heart level and what we do in our lifestyle responses.

The Lord requires the response that is outlined in the book of Joel. Very simply, we are to turn to God with all of our heart, and we are to prioritize praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a turning of the tide of darkness. You might ask, “Well, if the darkness is going to increase, and it is in the Bible, why do we pray for the turning of the tide of darkness?” We pray because there are going to be regions across the earth that have more intensified darkness than other places. There will be regions across the earth that will have the glory of God in a more intensified way than other regions. No one knows for sure what region will be at what level of intensity of darkness or glory.

My posture is that I say, “Lord, wherever You have put me, I am going to gather believers, and we are going to go for the double portion of the glory in the region of the earth I live in.” I am going to lay hold of that, and I am going to join in with other believers around the world laboring for their region as well. I am not going to sit back and let darkness increase. We may see a revival so glorious in our part of the earth, and you in the region you live in.

I do not know how big a region is. You might wonder how big it is. Only the Lord knows those things, but the invitation is put out. He says, “Come to Me with all of your heart. Gather together in your weakness and brokenness.” Beloved, we are all weak and broken people. There are no super saints out there. I love what Misty Edwards said earlier today. She said there are no super saints; there are only believers who refuse to quit, who will believe God and press in and refuse to quit and refuse to let darkness win the day in the part of the earth where God has planted them by His leadership.

I look at my city, my region, and my nation, and I do not know how big the region is. Still I say, “Not here. Darkness is not going to accelerate and overcome here.”

I am believing God for an outpouring of light. Who knows how far it will go? The Lord does not tell us. He says, “You press in, and you let Me answer you.”

Let’s read Joel 2. “Blow the trumpet in Zion.” When we read “Zion,” we are talking about in the midst of the people of God. “Sound an alarm on My holy mountain.” Many times in the Bible, Zion is talking specifically about the city of Jerusalem. As we understand God’s heart in this passage, He is saying, “In the midst of the people of God.” That is the application for us right now. In the midst of the people of God we are to blow the

¹ http://www.mikebickle.org.edgesuite.net/MikeBickleVOD/2008/150_Chapters_on_the_End_Times.pdf

trumpet. I am not calling the unbelievers to pray and fast. I am calling the believers to pray and fast. Not the unbelievers. Beloved, the responsibility and opportunity are for the people who have covenant relationship with Jesus. We have access to His heart. We are joined to Him by the Holy Spirit. We are part of His body. We are in His kingdom. We are priests and kings. We have a tremendous opportunity and access to who He is and to His Father and to the throne. The Scripture both **puts the responsibility** and **gives the opportunity** to the covenant people, the church of the Lord Jesus.

The Word of God says, “Blow the trumpet. Sound an alarm. Sound it in the midst of the people of God, in the holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.” Why? Verse 11, “Because the day of the Lord is great and very terrible. Who can endure it?” Verse 12, “Therefore, since the Lord is coming,” the Lord says, “Turn to Me with all of your heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning. Blow the trumpet in Zion,” He says again by the Holy Spirit and emphasizes. “Consecrate a fast.” To consecrate a fast means to dedicate that time of fasting before the Lord. “Call a sacred assembly.” An assembly means a gathering of people. A sacred assembly means a gathering of believers who are committed to fast and pray during that gathering.

There are one-day sacred assemblies. Governor Jindal in Louisiana is calling a solemn assembly on January 24. It is remarkable. We have a **governor** calling a sacred assembly. Governor Perry of Texas a few years ago called a solemn assembly in the Houston stadium. A governor did that! Beloved, I know of a few other governors who are born-again believers. They are talking about solemn assemblies, calling the body of Christ to cry out, not to “God” generically, but to Jesus. These men are calling out to Jesus, not to the god of Islam or to Buddha, but to Jesus. They are crying out for His mercy and His leadership. It is remarkable. I do not know that a governor has ever called a solemn assembly like this. I know Presidents Lincoln and Roosevelt called a day of prayer. I do not know that any of them ever called for a day of fasting and prayer to be held in a stadium or an arena gathering. Other governors are taking hold of this. This is a big day. Governor Brownback was with us two nights ago. I love my interaction with him. He says, “This is the wisdom of God. These are the things that God is doing.” I love it. Governors. Senators. Congressmen are buying into this. Men and women. Wow!

“Blow the trumpet in Zion!” Again, in our application of Zion right now we are talking about in the midst of the people. I am blowing the trumpet tonight. This conference has been a “blowing the trumpet conference.” We don’t always do this, but the Holy Spirit really impressed us, “Blow the trumpet in this conference. Make the young people aware that it is not business as usual.”

I said on Sunday night that in the next two or three years we are entering into a timeframe in our nation where it will never be the same. I have heard a number of congressmen and guys in those positions say that 2016 will be the most significant election in the history of America. I heard a few of them say that. I said, “Excuse me? In the **history** of America?”

These men love God, and they said, “Yes.” They went on for a half hour or an hour of why it will be the most significant hour in America.

I said, “Wow, I did not expect congressmen and senators to talk this way.” My heart was cheered.

I could imagine the Holy Spirit saying, “I have My men and women everywhere. I am stirring up My people.” Because beloved, in the next two or three years, it is going to be really intense in terms of some negative things that are about to unfold in this nation unless the supernatural hand of God breaks in. There is no remedy in the human arena for the trouble our nation is in. There are human things we can do, that we must do. We must fast and pray. We must use the act of intercession called voting. How many of you know that voting is an act of intercession? We have to preach the gospel. That is another thing we do. There are human things we do, of

course, but there is no remedy for our nation if the invisible hand of God does not break in with mercy. Beloved, there is no remedy right now that men and political leaders can pull off without the breaking in of God. God says, “You know the way. I will break in. I have promised it in My Word. Yes, there are things you must do, and it will not succeed unless I break in. For Me to break in, I am requiring your partnership and cooperation with Me.”

Joel 2:28. I am skipping some verses here in the notes, but when you read the chapter there is a sequence and a flow of thought. I am presenting the chapter in context of the flow of thought that I believe Joel intended us to understand. Meaning, I am presenting a few verses from this passage, but when you read the whole thing you can see the sequence Joel is making. He is blowing the trumpet in Joel 2. Notice what he says in verse 28, “Afterwards.” After what? It says afterwards. After verse 12, after the people cry out to Me and turn to Me with all of their heart. After they blow the trumpet and gather together, because the blowing of the trumpet is not only a warning. The trumpet blast is a warning that crisis is coming, but the trumpet blast is also the rallying cry to the house of prayer. I am talking about in the Old Testament. When they blew the trumpet, it meant danger is on the horizon, and when they blew the trumpet, it had a second meaning. It meant gather the people of God before God and cry out to Him. We will just call that “gather to the house of prayer.” I do not mean a ministry or that kind of thing. I mean the church gathering to cry out together.

When we blow the trumpet, we announce the looming crisis. When we blow the trumpet, we announce the great promises of revival. When we blow the trumpet, we gather the people together. Those are all dimensions of blowing the trumpet. Verse 28, “Afterwards I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.” On all nations. Not just Israel. While I labor in prayer for God’s outpouring of His Spirit and the salvation of the Jewish people, here it is “all flesh.” All nations, all flesh. Not just on a few leaders. There is an outpouring of the Spirit that started on the day of Pentecost, but this thing, this promise is for all nations, all flesh, where sons and daughters will move in the spirit of power all over the nations of the earth. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. In that place of the word “prophesy,” we could say they will experience the power of God, they will speak under the power of God, they will interact with God by the Holy Spirit and power.

How far is this thing going? Verse 30, “I will show wonders in the heavens.” The “heavens” means the sky above. He says, “I will give signs in the sky that will declare My truth. I will do miracles on the earth.” This is going to get intense. Is this all going to happen after the Lord returns? No. Verse 31, it is before the Lord returns that this takes place. Look at verse 31. Underline the words that it happens “Before the great and the awesome day of the Lord.” I want you to notice in verse 31 the day of the Lord is called great and awesome, but look at verse 11. The day of the Lord is called great and very, very terrible. Meaning it is very severe, but it is very great as well. It is great and terrible.

- C. The theme of the book of Joel is the day of the Lord (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). This “day” speaks of a time when God intervenes in history with unusual manifestations of power on behalf of His people and against His enemies. It is “His day” because His power is displayed for all to see.

The book of Joel is only three chapters. I have taught the book of Joel a number of times over the years. It is three little chapters. It is a pretty easy book to cover in a Bible school course, but it moves me. I have taught it over the years, and I mean every time I teach it I walk away from the course and say, “I am really serious this time, Lord.” Teaching this book, reading it, grappling with the promises and grappling with the warnings, it will mark you. I am telling you it will mark you. The theme of the book of Joel is the day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord is an interesting term in the Bible. The day of the Lord speaks of those very few days—it is very few days—where God breaks into human history in a unique way, where He manifests His power in a way far above the norm. There are a few times in history in the Old Testament where the prophets called what

happened in a series of events “the day of the Lord.” It is God’s day. That is why it is called the day of the Lord. It is His day. It is the King’s day. Jesus is the King. It is His day. He shows His power for His people, and He manifests His power against His enemies in a unique and a dramatic way.

The ultimate day of the Lord is when the Lord returns. I do not think it is so far away. I don’t know if I will see it in my lifetime, but I believe a number of you will, or if you do not, at least your children or their children will. I believe a number of you will. I cannot be sure. I might. I don’t know. Things are escalating so quickly, and you never know with God. You never know. Things may speed up in a rapid escalation, and things may slow down. I know one thing: things are definitely unfolding in a dramatic way.

In the Old Testament there were what I call the lesser days of the Lord. There are a few timeframes in history where it was called “the day of the Lord.” They give us a picture so we can learn from the events that happened in those days and get insight into the grand and ultimate day of the Lord that is yet to come. I study. You study. As God’s people, we study the lesser days of the Lord through history in the Bible—the few of them—and we gain insight into what the greater day of the Lord is going to look like. That is a remarkable reality.

- D. **A great Day (2:11):** Those who love Jesus will witness the greatest outpouring of the Spirit in history leading to His return. In this great revival, the Spirit will release the miracles that were seen in the book of Acts and in the book of Exodus, combined and multiplied on a global scale.

It is called a great day. I believe for those that love Jesus what is coming in the days ahead is great. It is already happening in Africa. We saw the videos of Reinhard Bonnke. Remarkable. Can you fathom the new hour we are living in, with gospel prosperity? Where the gospel is prospering—the preaching of the gospel in the nations? Reinhard Bonnke saw one million people saved in one meeting in Nigeria. One meeting. Beloved, it is a new day. It is a new hour. It is a great day. I believe we are going to see miracles beyond any time of history. Signs in the heavens, signs in the earth, the power of God bearing witness to the preaching of Jesus and His leadership.

- E. **A very terrible Day (2:11):** Those who rebel against Jesus in that hour will experience the most severe time of judgment in history. Jesus spoke of this as an unprecedented time of trouble. The Lord will shake all nations in the context of multitudes coming to Jesus (Heb. 12:26; Rev. 7:14).

¹⁴**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world...then the end will come...**

²¹**Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world. (Mt. 24:14, 21)**

⁷**“I will shake all nations, and they shall come to [Jesus] the Desire of All Nations.” (Hag. 2:7)**

It will be a very terrible day. For the people who stand against Jesus, it is called very terrible. When God calls a timeframe in history very terrible, that is intense. We are leading up to the ultimate day of the Lord. Again, I do not know when, but the decades are unfolding. We are getting closer. We are getting closer. The Psalm 2 crisis that is growing so rapidly, that crisis and that cry against Jesus in the culture are escalating so fast. That is part of the crisis of the hour. It is going to lead to something far more intense. It says in Haggai 2, “God is going to shake all the nations, and all the nations are going to come to Jesus.” That does not mean everyone is going to get saved. That is not what it means. It means there will be a spirit of revival in every nation of the earth. There will be a visitation of power in every single nation of the earth.

Matthew 24:14, “The gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all the nations of the world.” The idea is that it will be preached **in power**. Notice that as the gospel is going forth in power, tribulation is increasing. There is an increase of power in the church while there is an increase of trouble and crisis in the nation. I would like

just the increase of the glory of God and leave it there. If my vote counted—it does not in this regard—I would say, “Lord, let’s not do the negative. Let’s put everybody’s freewill on hold for a while. Let’s simply have glory.” That would be awesome. Well, it is not going to work that way. He is going to let everybody operate in freewill, and sin will escalate. Perversion is increasing.

*God says, “I am going to shake the nations.” We see that the gospel of the kingdom is going to be preached. Listen to this; it is very important. The gospel of the kingdom is much more than the invitation to personal salvation. The gospel of the kingdom **begins** by the invitation to receive Jesus in your personal life, but the gospel of the kingdom is **more** than a personal reception of forgiveness. **The gospel of the kingdom is the message about a King who is going to take over the earth.** There is a personal response, and we call that being born again, but **there is a global, cosmic response where God breaks in with power and takes over the leadership of the earth and drives evil off the planet related to the second coming.** His judgments are released in the earth. His power is released in the earth. That is also a part of the gospel of the kingdom message.*

I have had people say to me, “The gospel of the kingdom is being preached everywhere.”

I reply, “Well, the message of personal salvation is being preached everywhere, and I am excited. But that is only part of the gospel of the kingdom. There is a King coming. The King has the rightful authority over every nation, and the kings of the nations are resisting that King. God will not have it in that way. The great King that the Father is exalting—Jesus—is going to have a confrontation with the kings of the earth.” That is part of the message.

Are you a “gospel of the kingdom” preacher? Or are you a “You know what? I will just do the gospel of how to get forgiven, and I will just leave it there. I will not do the King thing. I will do the forgiven thing, leave it at that, and see what happens.”

I am a gospel of the kingdom preacher. I want to see people get saved, individually get born again, but I want to preach the message of the King and His rightful reign over the nations. I want to see what the Bible says about the kings of the earth resisting Him. I want to see what the Bible says about the body of Christ participating with Jesus and the release of His glory in the earth. All of that is contained in the gospel of the kingdom message. Haggai 2, all the nations are going to be shaken when the King confronts these earthly kings. The nations are going to come to Jesus, and His beauty will be made manifest in a most glorious way.

I want to take just a minute and give you a little bit of the story of Joel 1-2 very briefly. I have quite a few notes on mikebickle.org about Joel 1-2 if you want them. They are free. I would encourage you to study the book of Joel because the book of Joel is a picture of the lesser day of the Lord related to Joel’s generation. There was a lesser day of the Lord. It is a picture of the greater, ultimate day of the Lord at the end of the age when Jesus returns. We study what happened in Joel 1-2, in the lesser day, and it gives us a model to understand the ultimate day of the Lord so that we are not confused. Many people in the nations are confused. What is happening? I say, “I can tell you. Read Joel 1-2. There has already been a dress rehearsal of it. It is all written out. I can tell you to where God is leading things. I can tell you what God wants His people to do, how He wants them to respond.”

Joel 1, ever so briefly. Being a Bible teacher this kind of tortures me. It is a glorious chapter, but I am going to be ever so brief and move on. Joel 1 is powerful. At a quick read you might not catch the implications. In Joel 1 there was a great economic crisis in the land. Concerning the economic crisis, God told the people, “Cry out for mercy. Gather in fasting and prayer. Turn your heart to God.” This economic crisis and great drought were on the nation, both an agricultural crisis and food shortage, and there was disruption in society. America is touching some of the things in Joel 1, but Joel 1 is the beginning of the story. God told them, “When the

economic crisis and the drought, the social chaos, and food shortage begin, when those things start happening, you better cry out to God because Joel 2 comes next.” Joel 2 is military invasion.

I believe Joel is talking to the same generation in Joel chapters 1 and 2. I have studied many, many commentaries in my research and study. I have studied men and women of God who are scholars. I have taken much insight from them, so this is not my own interpretation. Now I am just throwing out a number here; it is not an exact number, but I believe that the day of the Lord activities in Joel unfolded over a thirty or forty-year period, not a one-day period. Back in the early days of the crisis Joel was saying, “Cry out to God, fast and pray. The economic crisis.”

The people of Jerusalem were like, “Joel, calm down. There is a drought every now and then.”

He said, “You better cry out. God is talking to us.” Though the devil is often involved in the details, God is involved in His sovereignty, and He has power over the devil. Some of it is God, some of it is the devil, and some of it is the sin of man. There is a combination of those things. I don’t want to go into that right now.

He was blowing the trumpet back when there was an economic crisis. Joel would not have known this, but it was thirty, forty years while the negative was increasing, increasing, increasing, and there were gaps. There were lulls where God took His hand off, in the sense of the intensity letting up like birth pangs. He was saying, “I am giving you a chance to respond.”

In the lulls, when the intensity was lessened, the people of God went on, business as usual, not paying attention to the Lord. They said, “The trouble is over.”

Joel answered, “It is not. It is a lull. There is a greater intensity coming soon.” The crisis built for about thirty or forty years. That lesser day of the Lord in the book of Joel led to 586 BC, the greatest crisis in Israel’s history in the Old Testament, when the city of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed.

I believe the book of Joel was leading up to it, a couple decades ahead of time. It kept getting more intense, more intense. They would not respond. The Lord would say, “I am trying to get their attention.”

Beloved, I believe America is on that same trajectory right now. I believe there is going to be so much pressure right around the corner without the intervention of God. The idea that the next five, ten, and twenty years will be like the last twenty is unreality. Unreality. There are so many financial pressures going on. It is just like Joel 1. Much of the church in America is trying to figure out how to use the Bible just to get happier, to get more stuff, to validate their compromising lifestyles, twisting verses about the grace of God to back up and give them confidence how they can live passive “Christian” lives, how they can live in compromise and still claim Jesus.

Beloved, that is not the answer. Things are going to get more and more intense, and the outpouring of the Spirit is being offered to us as a nation. I want to stand in the gap. I want to do my part. I want to spend all of my strength—I will be sixty years old on my next birthday—and I am going to spend all of my days getting the people of God to turn with all of their heart to God, to gather together in fasting and prayer, and to cry out for the breaking in of the greatest revival of history and the stemming of the tide of darkness in our communities and in our nation and the nations of the earth.

So Joel 1—drought, economic crisis, civil unrest—sounds like America to me. Joel 2. Joel came back, and they said they thought they had recovered. They thought, you know, 911, Katrina, social unrest, economic pressures, 2008 economic setbacks, all kinds of darkness, gay agenda exploding across our nation and being promoted like it is God’s will or something like that, all that has happened in the last five or ten years. Joel came on the scene and said, “Guys, Joel 1 is the beginning of that twenty, thirty, forty-year cycle.” That is more of a thirty, forty-year cycle. He continued, “Joel 2 is coming next. Military invasion.”

They said, “Well, no, no, no! We just went through such intensity. We think it is over. We have had enough.”

He said, “No, you are only in a reprieve right now by the mercy of God.” Then there were three waves of military invasion over twenty years. There was a wave from Babylon, followed by a ten-year gap. Then came the second wave from Babylon. Another ten-year gap and the third wave annihilated the nation. In the gaps, the people of God said, “Wow, I guess we got through that one.”

Joel said, “No, no. Another wave is coming.” Five years went by and it did not come. He said, “It is coming.” The Lord may let five or ten years go by. He might let more time go by. It is a reprieve to give mercy and time for a response. They did not, and that lesser day of the Lord in 586 BC just crushed the nation. God saved a remnant. That is another story for another time.

It happened suddenly. It happens suddenly when it escalates. That first wave of military invasion terrified Israel. Then it left. Ten years, “Okay, I think it is gone.” The second wave, “Oh no.” It is over, “Whew, that was a close one.” The third wave suddenly came upon them. Beloved, do not get used to business as usual because those days of business of usual are over. I mean this next two to three years, five and ten years, are so significant. Your children, your grandchildren—I am talking to you twenty-somethings—yes, you are going to have children and grandchildren, and there is so much that is in the balance of the covenant people of God responding to God and taking a stand for His promises or letting things go as they go.

Right now the prayer movement is exploding. It is growing fast in America. It is growing fast across the earth. Governors in America, senators, congressmen, pastors, students, university professors, homeschooling moms, are calling prayer meetings and days of prayer. It is encouraging, but the majority of the body of Christ is not responding. The number of those responding is growing fast, but far greater numbers of born-again believers are not responding. They are thinking, “Let’s not get too crazy. I mean 2008 passed.” Most of you know 2008 was when there were great economic pressures. “It is gone. We made it.” No, no, no. Another wave is coming far worse than 2008. We are in a reprieve right now. Read the book of Joel.

- F. The Lord will anoint *Day-of-the-Lord* messengers who will inspire and alarm God’s people and cause their hearts to be strong in faith with trembling. These forerunners will proclaim both the *great* and *terrible* aspects of the Day of the Lord. Jesus taught that the “wheat” and “tares” will grow together and mature and be harvested at the end of the age (Mt. 13:30, 39; Rev. 14:14-20). Day-of-the-Lord preachers have never been popular, but they have been used to change history.
- G. Forerunners are “messengers” who function with a specific message in different spheres of life. For example, they are preachers, evangelists, artists (singers, musicians, actors, etc.), writers (Internet), in media or business, or intercessors, as well as those who disciple people one on one in the church, university, or home (moms and dads are some of the most important forerunners).

“Forerunners” is a term we use meaning those who are just declaring what is going to be obvious in a short amount of time from now. Declaring what the Bible says is coming. That is what a forerunner does. They are day of the Lord preachers. They are proclaiming the great increase of the power of God, and they proclaiming the increase of the crisis. They are calling the people of God to wholeheartedness and to come before God in fasting and prayer.

Some of these forerunners or these “day of the Lord” messengers are preachers with a microphone, but most of these forerunners do not have a microphone. They use social media. They lead a campus ministry of ten or twelve people. They do one-on-one discipling. They are talking to other people, leaders or non-leaders. These are forerunners. These are day-of-the-Lord messengers telling the good news of the great day and telling the ominous news of the terrible day. Again, for the people of God it is a great day, while for the people who stand

against the King it going to be a very terrible day. That ultimate day might be a while before it happens. The intensity leading up to it is clearly in front of us now.

Homeschooling moms can be forerunners. I believe the most powerful disciple-makers in church history are moms in their homes. Did you know that you are involved in the Great Commission when you are talking to little Billy and Susie who are three or four years old? You are actually doing the Great Commission. “I thought I had to get on a plane and go to another nation to do the Great Commission.” No. The Great Commission is done in every city and nation outside of Jerusalem. The nations are everything outside of Jerusalem. You are in the nations. Just because little Billy and Susie have your blood in them does not mean you are not doing the Great Commission. You really are. Two thousand years later, I think moms have done more work in the kingdom than any one group in the body of Christ. Really. Really. I have heard some ladies say, “Once I raise my kids I am really going to get into the Great Commission.”

“You are doing it right now. Isn’t that discipling?”

“Well I know, but...”

“What do you mean you know but? You are doing it. There is more besides this, but beloved you are doing it.”

Do not think, “I am a college student. I will get married and have a couple kids, hopefully. Then when I am forty-six, I’ll do it.” No. Do it now. Call prayer meetings with little Billy and Susie and the kids next door. Have a solemn assembly. Fast till noon. Give them a cookie at 8:00 in the morning and then fast until noon. Give them two cookies at 8:00 in the morning. Whatever. You know what I mean. Maybe fast till 10:30.

II. THE RESPONSE THAT GOD REQUIRES: SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

- A. The Lord tells His people how to respond in a national crisis (when there is no human remedy) in a way that results in Him intervening with great power, mercy, and deliverance. Joel summoned people to return to God with confidence that He is gracious, kind and relents from doing harm.

¹²“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” ¹³So rend your heart...return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. ¹⁴Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing...? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; ¹⁶gather the people... ¹⁷let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord”... ²⁸Afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy... ³⁰I will show wonders... ³¹before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.” (Joel 2:12-31)

Here is the response. It is so simple. It does not take a Bible teacher. The Lord tells us what He wants. Isn’t that great that we are not left guessing? I have gotten to talk to some of these political leaders. I say, “I am positive I know what God wants.”

They say, “Really?”

I say, “I am positive.”

“Positive?”

“Yes. Turn to Joel 2. This is what He wants. I promise you this is what He is after. It is not the only thing He is after, but I promise you that is what is on His mind.”

Verse 12, “Turn to Me with all of your heart.” Do you know why God wants you to turn to Him with all of your heart? Because He turned to you with all of His heart. Did you know that He loves you with all of His heart?

That is why He wants you to love Him with all of your heart. He wants a relationship of wholehearted love. He is not lonely. He does not feel rejected if you do not love Him, like, “Oh no, he does not love Me. I feel so hurt! Father, he doesn’t love Me. He loves his other stuff more.” Jesus is not hurt by that. He is not needy. He is not lonely. He loves you. He says, “I want wholehearted people. I am a God of wholeheartedness. I love wholeheartedly. I want wholeheartedness in the relationship.”

You are not earning anything through wholeheartedness. Some people say, “You are earning, and you are into legalism.” Legalism is the most misused term that I have listened to for forty years. I have heard so many people who say “Legalism,” when they get pushed on dedication, which is code for, “I do not want to invest my energy into the relationship.”

*If you cry legalism, I have seen a lot of preachers back away. It is like a plague, “They said the L word. I am sorry. I am sorry. Just be uncommitted. I am sorry. I am into grace.” Beloved, the grace of God empowers you to be wholehearted, to throw your strength into the relationship. Legalism is code for “quit bothering me with the issue of commitment to Jesus. I am just going to rest in the Lord.” Beloved, He loves you. We are not talking about earning salvation or earning love. We are talking about **responding in gratitude** because He loves you with all of He heart.*

For some reason He wants all of your love because that is the kind of God He is. Isn’t that amazing? I serve a King who wants all of my love. I say, “Why would you want all of my love? I am not that cool. I do not love that well. Why are You that interested in me?”

His answer is, “I am the God of love, and everything I am about with My people is wholeheartedness. I will give you grace and power to be wholehearted if you want it.” It is about covenant love.

In verse 13, He says, “Rend your heart.” That means tear your heart. You know, sometimes we are stuck in a situation in life with compromise, and it tears us to break our agreement with that compromise. It hurts. I have had the guy say, “I really love her, but it is a relationship that is completely out of the will of God.”

I say, “Well, I know, but you love Jesus.” There is a tear that is involved.

The guy says, “I need this...I want this...” whatever. I do not want to go through all the illustrations.

There is a tearing, but you know what? In the love of God, He tore His Son. The Father tore His own heart and sent His Son to you. His Son’s body was broken and torn. He knows about tearing the heart for the sake of love. He knows all about this. He is the God who tore His own heart for love. He knows the glory of love. He is not asking you to love Him duty-bound and serve Him in a duty-bound way. He says, “I tore My heart because I love you. This is what I value. Tear your heart.” There have been issues in my life over the years where it is like, “Ouch.” He says, “That is okay. I am worth it. It is worth it. Your liberty is worth it. Just keep on moving towards Me.”

Tear your heart. It is beautiful that God tore His heart for you and me. Return. Why? Here is the confidence. No matter how broken you are, no matter how deeply in bondage you are to something, I want to give you courage from Joel. God is gracious. If you will take one step toward Him, He will take ten towards you. If you will tear your heart and say, “Lord, I want to obey You. I am not good at follow-through, but I want to be Yours,” the Lord says, “I will be gracious with you.”

Joel says, “He will be very tender in His mercy.”

The devil comes and tells you, “God has a big hammer, and He is waiting for a reason to crush you.”

No. He is filled with mercy. Micah 7 says He delights in showing mercy. He loves to show you mercy. He loves it. He has great kindness. He relents; that means He changes His mind. What? How could the God who knows everything change His mind? He relents. The harm that was coming to a nation, God says, “I change it. I change what is going to happen.” Like, “He relents. Oh my goodness, this is awesome.”

Verse 14, “Who knows the measure?” This is like asking, “Joel, how far will the darkness in America go, and how far will the revival go in my area, in my nation?”

Joel answers in verse 14, “Who knows?”

“Oh, come on, Joel. Give me some more details. I want to know, is it going to be phenomenal in my future because of my prayer and crying out to God?”

Joel says, “God will hear it all, but who knows what is going to happen in your city and nation?”

I agree with Reinhard. America will be saved. A blood-washed America. I heard him say for years, “I see nothing but a blood-washed Africa.” I used to listen to him preach and I would think, “Ooh, ooh, ooh.” Now he is saying, “A blood-washed America. I tell you the truth it will happen.” He was having lunch with me. He is seventy-five years old and was saying to me “I tell you the truth. This thing is going to happen. I want to be a part of this.”

I am looking at him, thinking, “Glory to God. Yes, Reinhard, I am in.” I want to be like that when I grow up.

Verse 15, “Blow the trumpet. Call the sacred assembly.” The sacred assembly is one day. It is sacred, meaning it is holy to God. It is an assembly because the people gather, be it five or ten people, twenty or thirty, five thousand or ten thousand. A stadium or a college classroom. It does not really matter. A basement, a garage. They assemble together. A prayer room in the church. A boardroom in the marketplace. A homeschooling gathering of moms. All the coaches on the Little League team who are believers and are bringing their kids out to the games. Those dads gather together. That is a solemn assembly.

Gather the people. I have been involved in a number of solemn assemblies, and at first I was so excited. I remember when I first started preaching Joel 2, like thirty-five years ago. I was pastoring in Saint Louis. I called my first solemn assembly. I was so excited. I laid it out. Joel 2. I was in my twenties. Everybody was excited. We called it. Everybody showed up, I mean all ten of us. My little church. We were doing it. The prayer meeting was pathetically boring. It was not exciting at all, but here is what I learned. We have done a bunch of them over the years, and I have learned that God is saying, “That is all I asked. I did not ask you to make the meeting awesome. I just asked you to come to it.”

We offer our prayers in our weakness. We pray, and we say, “Surely this does not move You.” Because our prayers do not move us, we think they do not move God. We offer our prayers in weakness, but, beloved, they ascend in power because of the blood of Jesus.

He says, “I will show you wonders”—verse 30—“before.” Verse 28, “After the prayer and fasting.” It is not like you pray and fast so you deserve an outpouring. It is a lifestyle. It is a culture in the Church that includes prayer and fasting. It is not a one-time desperate move. We want many of these gatherings in the life of our spiritual families. It is not a one-time event that he is talking about because it is a thirty or forty-year escalating crisis happening in Joel’s day. It took thirty or forty years for the thing to come to a head. Beloved, I believe we are in that trajectory. We are in that pathway. There are both revival and great crisis coming, and I believe both of them will happen, but to what degree in what part of the nation I do not know. I am pressing into this thing. Tonight we are going to cry out to God for a while.

- B. **Relents from doing harm:** The Lord is willing to cancel the judgment that He decreed in heaven. God desires to transform a would-be disaster zone into a revival center. There are two stages in God's decreed judgments: first, a decree of judgment is established in His heavenly court; second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute the judgment (Ezek. 9), or it is canceled.

¹Gather yourselves together...²before the decree [of judgment] is issued...before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you...³Seek the LORD ...it may be that you will be hidden [protected from judgment] in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:1-3)

⁷"I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city." (Amos 4:7)

He relents from harm. This is so remarkable. We are talking about the sovereign God, the Genesis 1 God. I mean Genesis 1 He says, "Earth exist." Boom! there is an earth. That is power, right? "Stars exist." Boom! stars exist. That is power. He is powerful. He says to us, "I will change what is going to happen. Weak and broken people through the blood of Jesus in covenant with Me, tell Me the things I tell you to tell Me." In other words they pray the Word of God back to God, and they turn their hearts to Him. He says, "If you do this, I will actually do more. I will stop the harm that is coming." The invisible hand. Beloved, prayer and fasting are critical for America. We are in a Joel 1 economic, drought, food shortage, and I realize food is not in shortage here and not there, all that kind of stuff. It is that picture of Joel 1, social upheaval and crisis. We are on our way to an intensified Joel 1, then onto Joel 2 military problems, I believe even on our own shores. It is well within the reach of your lifetime. You think, "No way." Yeah, way.

Israel said, "No way."

God says, "You do not understand. I am shaking you. Yes, the devil is attacking you, but I am shaking you."

Zephaniah 2 says the same thing Joel 2 says and adds a few more ideas. I believe Joel and Zephaniah were contemporaries, because comparing passages in certain ways it seems that they were contemporaries or very close to it. I cannot prove it. It might have been a little bit after him possibly. It is hard to know for sure. Look what Zephaniah, a fellow prophet, said. Verse 1, "Gather yourselves together." That is a solemn assembly, again, whether fives and tens or 20,000. Gather together. Verse 2, "Before the decree is issued." What? Gather before the decree is issued. What decree? Before the decree of heaven says, "Judgment and shaking." Heaven is about to speak. Before the decree is issued, gather. Cry out to God. Turn your heart to God. You are not going to earn anything. You are going to position yourself in unity with His heart before the decree of heaven is released.

Beloved, look at America. There is sexual perversion and moral darkness exploding in our nation. There is the blood of fifty or sixty million babies crying out in our nation. There are pulpits that are now beginning to support and celebrate the darkness that is in the culture. There is the escalation of the gay agenda that has become a central conversation in our culture, with political and military leaders supporting and applauding it. I could give you twenty-five more things. Those are a few off the top that I have mentioned. You think there is not a decree about to be issued in heaven? Maybe it is, meaning there is a decree that is issued in heaven before it is issued on the earth. Zephaniah says, "Before the anger comes on you." Before the nation comes into crisis is what that means. Before the great crisis, cry out. The crisis can be stopped.

Verse 3, I love it. "Seek the Lord." That is Joel 2 language. Zephaniah and Joel say the same thing. Pay attention, verse 3, "It may be that you will be hidden. You will be protected." Zephaniah says, "You cry out." Maybe your group—I do not mean just your little group of three, but I am saying your region, your area—maybe God will cause it to be, I will just use the term, "a pocket of mercy."

I look at that “maybe,” and I say, “Lord, will it be?”

He says, “You just cry out and believe Me.”

I say, “Lord, I want to cry out before the decree is issued. It can be stopped.” There are two stages in God’s decreed judgments: first, a decree of judgment is established in His heavenly court; second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute the judgment (Ezek. 9), or it is canceled.

Amos 4:7, God makes it rain on one city and not rain on another city. Meaning, He is actively involved. “This city gets rain, this city does not get rain because I am talking to the cities.”

Sometimes the wicked cities get rain because God is giving them mercy. They are in a reprieve. If they do not repent, more happens. The rain sometimes is just a reprieve of mercy, and sometimes they respond, “We got the good stuff. Things must be good.”

God says, “No, I am being tender towards you to get your attention right now.” Remember in Joel’s day the day of the Lord was a thirty, forty-year series of events that built up to the final cataclysmic day of 586 BC when the city of Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The entire city was decimated. It was the most severe crisis in Israel’s history up to that point.

- C. A national disaster can be stopped. In response to prayer, God heals nations and changes the crisis that would have occurred (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32: 9-14; 2 Chr. 34:22-28; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:6-8; Ezek. 18:21-28; 33:10-14; Dan. 4:29; Amos 5:14-15; 7:1-6; Jon. 3:4-10; Mal. 3:16-4:6).

¹⁴If My people...will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear...and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chr. 7:14)

⁷The instant I speak concerning a nation...to destroy it, ⁸if that nation...turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. (Jer. 18:7-8)

²⁷“...because your [Josiah] heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place [Jerusalem]...²⁸... your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants.” (2 Chr. 34:27-28)

You know the verse. “If My people,” not the unbelievers, but if the people of God cry out, God will heal America. God will heal your city. God will heal your family. He will heal the part you are representing in your covenant relationship with Him.

Jeremiah 18—look at this. God says, in effect, “The instant I speak concerning a nation to destroy it, when I give the decree in heaven that nation is going to be destroyed, if that nation turns, I will relent of the disaster. I will relent of what I was going to do.” That is remarkable. It doesn’t take a whole nation. It takes a remnant. I do not know how big the remnant is, but it takes the people of God. I do not know how many it takes. God will not tell me, and He will not tell you. I am just getting everybody to do this that I can. Jeremiah 18, “The instance I speak concerning a nation to destroy it, if the nation turns to Me, I will relent. I will change the plan and I will save the nation.”

“Lord, I am putting my city and my nation right there, and a few other nations too.”

Look at 2 Chronicles 34. I am going to read these next couple verses and then we are going to respond to the Lord. The Lord is talking to the young king, Josiah. The young king heard the words of judgment of the Babylonian destruction coming, the one that Joel is talking about. Huldah the prophetess says to the king, “Because your heart was tender,”—this is individual—“because you humbled yourself, when you heard the

words of judgment, you did not just cast them off. You humbled yourself. You were tender. Because of that,” look at verse 28, “Your eyes will not see the trouble.”

I look at that and I say, “What?”

God says, “That young man was tender; he humbled himself.” As in, when he heard the words of judgment, he did not say, “That is just Old Testament. It does not really matter. I am going to do what I want to do. Grace of God.” All this rigmarole that is going on in some circles.

This king humbled himself, and he said, “God, You said trouble is coming to my city of Jerusalem?”

“Yeah.”

“God, forgive me. Forgive.”

The word of the Lord comes. 2 Chronicles 34:28, God says, “Tell that young king his eyes will not see the trouble. I will spare him.”

“Lord, You spare cities and nations and people, families?”

He answers, “Yes, I do.”

“Really? I like this. You mean it matters? Even if the judgment came to Jerusalem, he got spared?”

God says, “Yeah. I am going to do that. I know how to cause it to rain on one city and not on another city. I know how to cause judgment to hit one area, but not another area. I know how to do all of that.”

- D. The Lord searches for intercessors who will pray for His judgments to be withheld (Ezek. 22:30). He protected those who cried out (intercessors) from His judgment on Jerusalem (Ezek. 9:4-6)

³⁰So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. (Ezek. 22:30)

⁴“Go through the midst of...Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” ⁵To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare...” (Ezek. 9:4-5)

Ezekiel 9. We will end with this. This is a declaration to the angels. These are the angels before the throne. He says, “Angels,” Ezekiel 9:4, “Go through the midst of Jerusalem.” This is still talking about the same day I have been talking about, when Israel got decimated. Now Ezekiel is talking about it, 586 BC. All of these verses are talking about the same timeframe. God tells the angels, “Go through the city of Jerusalem.” Look at this. This is such an amazing verse. “Mark the heads of the men who cry out over the sin of the city, who intercede, who stand in the gap. Mark the men, mark the families that line up with Me and cry out. They sigh over the abominations. They are grieved over them. They agree with Me. They take a stand.” He says, “Protect them.” That is the idea. “The others are going to be destroyed.” I am not happy that someone is destroyed. That is not my point. I want to tell you this. Those who grieve and repent are spared.

Zephaniah, let’s just look at it one second. Look back to paragraph B. Zephaniah 2:3, “Seek the Lord. It may be that you will be hidden.” You will be protected. Maybe the rain will come on your city and not on another city. It might be that, like that king, you will not see the evil in your day. It may be that the crisis is delayed three or four decades and you only see the revival in your day. Maybe not. It may be that the city may be visited, but God will mark the foreheads of the families that cried out to Him. We do not know.

I know this. It matters to God that we cry out to Him. It matters to God that we give Him all of our heart. It matters that we break our unity and agreement with immorality. We break our agreement with false doctrines, even about Jesus and the grace of God. I mean the distorted grace message is polluting the church, that teaching on grace that is not the biblical presentation, but uses biblical terms. Young people are tricked by the terms because they do not know the Bible.

Beloved, we are going to usher in the new year. Jaye is going to lead us. We are going to cry out to God. We are going to take some time and ask the Lord as we turn our own heart to Him. Beloved, crisis is not just coming. It is here. It is escalating in the next five or ten years. Then the next five or ten years. Revival is here, and it is escalating. I am ready to go as deep in God as He will let me go with a group of people all over this nation. Let's stand.