

Studies in Joel

A Call to Radical Christianity in the End Times

Study Guide by

Mike Bickle



Studies in Joel Course Notes
by Mike Bickle

Published by Forerunner Publishing
International House of Prayer
3535 E. Red Bridge Road
Kansas City, MO 64137
forerunnerpublishing@ihop.org
IHOP.org
MikeBickle.org

Copyright © 2009 by Forerunner Publishing. All rights reserved.

Our copyright is the right to copy: anyone may freely copy Mike Bickle's teaching material from this book.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version ®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Cover design by Isaac Reichenbach

Table of Contents

	Introduction: Forerunners Proclaiming the Coming of Jesus	Page 01
1.	Introducing the Book of Joel	Page 09
2.	The Day of the Lord	Page 19
3.	The Great and Very Terrible Day	Page 29
4.	The Primary and Secondary Causes of a National Crisis – Joel 1:15	Page 39
5.	Establishing a Joel 2 Spiritual Culture – Joel 1:2-3	Page 47
6.	The Fivefold Action Plan God Wants from Us – Joel 1:13-14	Page 53
7.	Military Invasions in God’s End-Time Plan – Joel 2:1-9	Page 63
8.	The Necessity of Day-of-the-Lord Preachers – Joel 2:1	Page 73
9.	How to Respond to Global Crisis – Joel 2:12-17	Page 79
10.	God’s Zeal to Release Blessing – Joel 2:18-27	Page 91
11.	The End-Time Outpouring of the Spirit – Joel 2:28-32	Page 99
12.	End-Time Judgment on Israel’s Enemies – Joel 3:1-8	Page 111
13.	Jesus the Victorious King at Armageddon – Joel 3:1-2, 9-17	Page 129
14.	Israel’s Victory in the Millennial Kingdom – Joel 3:17-21	Page 141
15.	Overview of the Millennial Kingdom	Page 145

Introduction: Forerunners Proclaiming the Coming of Jesus

In my opinion, we are in the early days of the generation in which Jesus will return. I believe that there are people alive today who will see the return of Jesus. It may be the 20-year-olds or it could be the 2-year-olds who see His return. I do not know. No one can know this with certainty. However, I do know that the Lord will raise up forerunners in the generation in which He returns. What is a forerunner? Forerunners proclaim the coming of the Lord and the events directly related to it. When we look at the first-century forerunners, it gives us insight into the life and role of forerunners in the end times. John the Baptist and the apostles were first-century forerunners; they went into various cities before Jesus in order to proclaim His coming.

[Jesus] . . . sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.

—Luke 9:52

The angel Gabriel alluded to Isaiah 40 when he described John the Baptist as a forerunner who would prepare people to receive Jesus at His first coming (Lk. 1:11-19).

It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

—Luke 1:17, NAS

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

—Isaiah 40:3

John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord (Jn. 1:23). These passages give us insight into the forerunner ministry as that of preparing people by announcing the coming of Christ. John was a prophet who also ministered as an evangelist, calling multitudes to come to Jesus. In other words, he announced the coming of Jesus while winning souls to the kingdom and making disciples by teaching them to pray, fast, and live righteously (Mt. 9:14; Lk. 3:3-18; 11:1).

Isaiah 62 describes forerunners in the generation in which the Lord returns: they will prepare people by building up the highway of the Lord and by lifting a banner message to the ends of the earth that God's salvation is surely coming. Forerunners proclaim the second coming of Jesus and give insight into the reward that He will bring with Him (Rev. 22:12).

Prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples! Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.'"

—Isaiah 62:10-11

Just as the first-century forerunners proclaimed the first coming of Jesus ahead of time, so also the end-time forerunners will proclaim the second coming of Jesus ahead of time. I believe that even now, God is beginning to prepare forerunners from many different streams in the Body of Christ worldwide. These forerunners will function in many different ways and with different ministry callings. They include those called as evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets, media missionaries, artists, singers, musicians, actors, writers or those called to the marketplace. Many will focus on making disciples by leading small groups in their church, university or work place. Moms and dads are some of the most effective forerunners as they teach their children about the coming of Jesus and its implication. The forerunner ministry is not reserved for some elite group of people—it is a calling available to any believer who is willing to announce the coming of Jesus and the events related to it.

Forerunners Proclaim Both Comings of the Lord

Forerunners emphasize Jesus' second coming at the same time as proclaiming the benefits of His first coming as they win the lost, heal the sick, help the poor, and walk in love and holiness. To understand the fullness of Jesus' earthly ministry, we must consider the two time frames that are related to His first and second comings. The first time frame started years before the cross and extends through church history. The second time frame starts three and a half years before His second coming and extends through the millennial kingdom. The second time frame is referred to as the Day of the Lord.

Jesus' earthly ministry in these two time frames is joined together in God's plan to accomplish the fullness of His purposes. There is a *dynamic continuity* between these two. We must not see them as separate realities but as the same glory of Jesus being manifest in two periods of time.

What was fully accomplished at Jesus' first coming will be *fully manifest in all the nations* in the events related to His second coming. At His first coming, He paid the price for our sin and sickness, defeated Satan, and released the power of the Spirit in and through His people so that they might live in victory over sin and make a dynamic impact on the nations in this age. At His second coming, He takes it all a step further by openly manifesting the *fullness* of His victory in *every* sphere of life. Imagine the power that He will exert when He raises every believer from the dead, casts Satan into prison, fully transforms every area of society in every nation, and removes the curse of sin from creation by restoring all things, including the animals, atmosphere, and agriculture. All of these activities are aspects of Jesus' earthly ministry as described in various end-time scriptures.

Some people only focus on the benefits of Jesus' first coming as it relates to His salvation and power being manifest over the last 2,000 years of church history. Others focus on the benefits of Jesus' first coming as it relates to the events of His second coming. These two periods are joined together in God's greater purposes. What God has joined together, let no man separate. We must proclaim the whole counsel of God, which includes His saving power being manifest on earth in both time frames (Acts 5:20; 20:20, 27).

Forerunners Live in Two Time Frames

Forerunners live both in the *now* and in the *future*. They press into the kingdom in the now while also preparing for the unique dynamics that will occur just before Jesus returns. They see the significance of the years leading up to His return, at which time extreme and unique dynamics—both positive and negative—will be occurring. These will include the greatest outpouring of the Spirit and revival in

history, one that will surpass the book of Acts. It will also include Satan's most intense rage against the human race and God's most severe judgments being poured out against the Antichrist's empire.

Noah is an example of a forerunner who lived in two time frames, seeking to live in the fullness of God's purposes in the now while preparing for the fullness of God's purpose in the future. He poured himself out in preaching to unbelievers while he was preparing an ark for a future storm that would not occur for many decades (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5).

We do not need to choose between *now* and *then*. It is our inheritance to walk in the fullness of what God intended for both time frames. End-time forerunners announce the second coming of Jesus while they win the lost, heal the sick, and make disciples.

Forerunners Prepare the Unprepared

Simply defined, the forerunner ministry announces the coming of the Lord and prepares the unprepared to receive the ministry of Jesus in the midst of the unique dynamics of the end times. Not all ministries feel called to emphasize the second coming of Jesus and the events related to it. However, those who do must prepare today by gaining deeper understanding of what the Scripture says about the end times.

How will forerunners *practically* prepare the unprepared? By informing them that Jesus is returning to the earth as the King of kings and by changing their *expectation and interpretation* of the unique events related to His coming. They will prepare people to respond rightly to Jesus by giving them understanding of His end-time plans so that they will be able to *agree* with what He is doing in that hour instead of *resisting* it.

If people lack understanding of what is happening in the end times, they will be far more vulnerable to yield to fear, offense, confusion, compromise, and deception. Their ignorance of what the Scripture says about the events occurring in that hour will cause them to make wrong decisions. As intense events unfold, many will lose their perspective and objectivity in seeing God's love and wisdom. People will need to see what is happening from a biblical perspective and understand the events as an expression of God's love and wisdom. Forerunners will bring this understanding of God's love to the context of the unique end-time events. Others will just be confused, without knowing what is right or wrong. Unbelievers will have a desperate need to understand what is happening (Mt. 24:37-39). Even some believers will struggle with offense at Jesus for what He is allowing to happen (Mt. 11:6). In contrast, those who do understand what is happening will be far more likely to grow in faith and love. By gaining understanding they will be able to discern the right things and, therefore, to resist the wrong ones. Forerunners proclaim from the Scripture what will happen before it occurs, including the end-time revival, judgment, deception, and persecution.

Forerunners Bring Understanding of the Judgment of God

The purpose of God's judgments against the Antichrist's empire is remove all that hinders love; they are expressions of His love. Those who misunderstand God's judgments will be offended and angry with Him. Forerunners will help people receive Jesus' love instead of being offended at Him. People must rightly interpret Jesus' judgments in order to trust His leadership so that they may mature in love for Him. Forerunners will bring right understanding about God's judgments. It is not enough to make

known the *fact* that God's judgments are coming against the Antichrist's empire—we must give the *reason* for them. We are to give the *why* behind the *what*.

At the heart of God's judgment is Jesus, intervening to deliver the oppressed and to stop oppressors. Think of the implications of a God who would not intervene to stop oppressors. What would you think of a father who would not intervene to prevent a man kidnapping his children? God's judgments are an expression of His love for His children. Furthermore, in the midst of those very judgments, God offers mercy to the oppressors if they will only repent and receive it. Isaiah proclaimed that when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9).

Praying against the Judgment of God in this Hour

In this hour, the saints are not to pray for judgment against ungodly nations. They are to cry out for God's mercy to triumph over judgment in the midst of ungodly nations. We pray for their salvation and deliverance. At this time, we do not pray to release God's judgment, but to stop it. The message of the Old Testament prophets was that God's people could stop the judgment of God through intercession. We see this message clearly throughout the entire book of Joel.

The only time when the saints are to pray for the release of judgment against the Antichrist's empire is in the final three and half years of this age. We must be clear that God's end-time judgments are focused on the Antichrist's reprobate empire. Reprobate people are so hardened in their hatred of God that they have no desire to ever repent. As Moses prayed for God to release His judgments against a reprobate Pharaoh in Exodus chapters 7 to 12, so the saints will pray for God to release judgment against the Antichrist's empire that seeks to oppress and kill the saints.

The greatest miracles of Jesus will be released through His Church during the final three and a half years of this age, when He releases signs and wonders against the Antichrist that are similar to those He released through Moses (Mic. 7:15). However, during the three and a half years before Jesus returns, we will pray for the judgments described in the book of Revelation to be released against the Antichrist and his empire, which will be comprised of reprobate peoples and nations. The reprobate in that hour will be far more hostile against Jesus as they oppress the saints. In that day, the prayers of *all* the saints from throughout history will be released against the Antichrist's empire (Rev. 8:3-5; Ps. 149:6-9).

Forerunners Prepare Themselves in the Word

Forerunners prepare themselves by going deep in God through studying the Scripture in the context of prayer with fasting, resisting temptation, enduring difficulties, ministering to people, and learning to operate in the gifts of the Spirit. The ministry we do today glorifies Jesus and helps people *while at the same time* preparing us for the future. The ministry we do today is an essential part of our preparation for future ministry.

Forerunners must grow in their understanding of the Scripture. There are over 150 chapters in the Bible that focus on Jesus' second coming and the end-time events that are associated with it. In comparison, the four gospels that give us a record of Jesus' ministry at His first coming total 89 chapters. The gospels give us a record of Jesus' ministry related to His first coming when He *redeemed us* from our sins. The 150 chapters on the end times reveal His ministry and the events related to His second coming when He will openly manifest His *rule over all the nations*. Many of God's people neglect these 150

chapters without considering that they come from the *same Bible*, reveal the *same Jesus*, and manifest the *same power* of the Spirit as the four gospels. These 150 chapters focus on Jesus' end-time plan and the demonstration of His signs and wonders in totally removing wickedness from the earth and fully establishing His peace, righteousness, and love in all the nations.

Forerunners will take time to gain understanding of what the Scriptures say about the end times so that they may prophetically declare it to others (Isa. 62:10-12; Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Dan. 11:33-35; 12:9-10; Joel 2:28-29; Mal. 4:5-6; Mt. 17:11; Acts 2:17-21; Rev. 11:3-6; 13:18). Jeremiah prophesied that in the last days God would give His people a supernatural ability to perceive His loving purposes in sending His judgments: "In the latter days you will *understand it perfectly*" (Jer. 23:20). Jeremiah went on to prophesy that God's messengers would *consider*, or search out, the Word of God to gain understanding of God's heart behind His end-time judgments (Jer. 30:24).

Daniel prophesied that people who having understanding in the end times shall instruct many:

Those of the people who understand shall instruct many . . . Some of those of understanding shall fall [martyrdom], to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.
—Daniel 11:33-35

God is raising up forerunners like John the Baptist who will be a voice with clarity, power, and boldness in the midst of much confusion. They will be a voice of things to come, not merely an echo (Jn. 1:23). Simply knowing a few Bible principles will not be enough; forerunners must grow in their understanding of the Scripture that they might be a clear prophetic voice in that hour.

Partnership with Jesus Now and Then

Some spend time preparing to engage in partnership with Jesus *now* with no thought of preparing for partnership with Him in the uniqueness of the end-time events. Their rationale is that we do not need to prepare because Jesus will just take care of things Himself at that time. There is a fundamental contradiction in this mindset. Though they correctly see Jesus as desiring partnership with His people today to change the world, they are wrong in thinking that He will not seek the same partnership in the years just before He returns. The good news is that Jesus wants full partnership with us now *and* then.

Jesus desires deep partnership with His Bride in every stage of His work in this age and the age to come, especially in the world-changing events that will occur just before He returns. He will not suddenly turn a cold shoulder to His Bride in that hour to take everything into His own hands, bypassing His joy in working through His people. As surely as He heals the sick and overcomes the oppressor through the prayers of the saints now, He will do the same then. Jesus longs for deep partnership with His people in every stage of His work in this age and the age to come.

We must be as intentional about preparing to partner with Jesus in the end times as we are in the now. The intensity of life at that time will require special preparation, especially in our understanding.

The End-time Hope for All the Nations

The return of Jesus is called the blessed hope: “The blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). He will come to rule all the nations and His judgments will remove all oppression and rebellion against God from the entire earth. All nations will live in the joy of God’s manifest presence with unprecedented prosperity, righteousness, unity, and goodness. The earth will enjoy an open heaven greater than at any time in history. Even the hostility of certain animals toward humans will be removed (Rom. 8:19-23). The entire earth will be healed as the land, water, and atmosphere are fully cleansed. The conditions of the garden of Eden will eventually fill the entire earth (Isa. 35:1-8; 51:3; Ezek. 34:29; 36:35; 47:6-12).

We will experience great advancements of God’s kingdom on the earth even before Jesus returns but it will increase even more dramatically after His return. There is a dynamic continuity between our labors and victories before He returns and the victories that He will establish after He returns. It will all work together as one seamless plan. The devil will be thrown into prison and all evil laws and leaders will be replaced by those that are righteous and good (Rev. 20:1-6). The earth will not end—Satan and the kingdom of darkness on earth will end. This is the greatest hope imaginable for our future and the generations to come. We are agents of change who confront evil now with the love and power of Jesus. There is no fear in love. The martyrs will overcome as they are victorious in love over Satan and all the ways of the Antichrist (Rev. 12:11; 15:2). We cry “come Lord Jesus,” asking Him to come and fully establish the work the Church has been involved in for 2,000 years in preaching His kingdom (Rev. 11:15).

Jesus Commanded His People to Know the Generation

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, my opinion is that we are in the early days of the generation in which Jesus will return. While no one can know the day or hour of His return, it is possible to know the generation of Jesus’ return, by observing the biblical signs of the times. My opinions on this generation are based on observation of the biblical signs, not on personal revelation such as prophetic visions. We must insist that our faith be based on what the Bible says, not on personal revelations about the timing of His return.

Jesus commanded one generation of believers to know that His return was near. Of course, it was the generation that would be alive to “see all these things,” or the signs that He prophesied in Matthew 24. They were to know that the end, or His return, was near. Some confuse not being able to know the day and hour (v. 36) with not being able to know the generation (v. 34).

When you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! . . . This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place . . . Of that day and hour no one knows.

—Matthew 24:33-36

A generation in Scripture ranges anywhere from 40 to 100 years (Gen. 15:13-16; Num. 32:13; Ps. 90:10; Mt. 1:17; Acts 7:6). Moses spoke of Israel's captivity in Egypt as lasting 400 years or 4 generations (Gen. 15:13). Thus, a generation could refer to 100 years. The 14 generations from Abraham to David averaged about 70 years each (Mt. 1:17). We are called to know or recognize the generation in which the Lord returns. The point is that when we know it is drawing near, we can only look up and lift up our heads:

There will be signs in the sun, in the moon . . . and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear . . . Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree . . ."
—Luke 21:25-26, 28-29

Jesus pointed out that many living in the last generation would not know that they were in the last generation (Mt. 24:37-39). But believers *can* know the generation just as Noah did. It should not catch the righteous off guard (1 Thes. 5:1-6). Jesus rebuked those of His generation for not seeing the prophetic signs of the times they were living in (Lk. 19:42-44). Paul taught that the Church should know the *times and seasons* related to Jesus' second coming (1 Thes. 5:1-6). Jesus and Paul both emphasized that the signs of the times can be known (Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 21:25-29; 1 Thes. 5:1-6; 2 Thes. 2:1-11).

Jesus connected the timing of His return to specific events and trends. There are sign events and sign trends predicted in Scripture that alert us to the timing of Jesus' return. As these trends accelerate at the *same time* on a *global level*, making headline news, we are to understand that we are in a unique season in history leading to Jesus' return. The light and darkness will both increase (Isa. 60:2; Mt. 13:30). Today, most of these trends are accelerating. For the *first* time in history, *most* of these trends and *some* of the necessary developments that will lead to the sign events are happening in an alarming measure, at the *same* time, and on a global basis.

The good news is that there is much biblical information about this because Jesus wants us to be prepared for His end-time purposes.

Sign events include the rebirth of the state of Israel in 1948. Israel becoming a nation was a necessary development for the abomination of desolation to occur. Positive trends indicating that we are close to the generation in which the Lord will return include Jesus' prophecy that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Mt. 24:14). The leading missionary organizations project from statistical data that the gospel will be presented to all 6,000 ethnic people groups among the 238 nations by 2015. Positive trends that serve as signs of the times also include the salvation of Israel, the global prayer and worship movement (Isa. 62:6-7), the people of God walking in their bridal identity (Rev. 22:17; Mt. 25:1-13), the outpouring of the spirit of prophecy (Acts 2:17), unparalleled understanding of end-time prophecy (Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Dan. 11:33; 12:10), and the global youth focus in the kingdom in which fathers turn their hearts to love and serve the younger generation (Mal. 4:5-6), including the fatherless (abortion, orphans, human trafficking).

Jesus prophesied *twelve negative trends* that bring distress to the nations and indicate the generation of His return (Mt. 24:4-14; Lk. 21:11, 25). Most of these trends are escalating at a speed that poses a threat to the stability and peace of the nations. Many negative sign trends are recorded in Matthew 24, including deception and false prophets (v. 4-5, 11, 24), ethnic conflict (v. 7), economic warfare (v. 7), famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (v. 8), hatred of believers (v. 9), relational breakdown in society (v. 10), and lawlessness, causing love to grow cold (v. 12). Further negative sign trends are recorded in Luke 21: fearful sights and signs in the sky (v. 11), and disturbances in the sea (v. 25). These trends have always existed in society, but in the end times they will have a distinct intensity that will make global headline news. God has a message to a generation in them; they are prophetic signs that are meant to give believers confidence that the Lord is near. Other trends include the harlot Babylon worldwide religion (Rev. 17:2-6), the falling away from the faith (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5), persecution against believers and lawlessness abounding (Mt. 24:12; Rev. 14:18), human trafficking (Rev. 18:13; Joel 3:3), pornography, and scoffers and mockers against the emphasis of preparing for the Lord's return (2 Pet. 3:3-4).

Session 1: Introducing the Book of Joel

I. WHY STUDY JOEL

- A. Over the years of attempting to teach this book to others so that they might proclaim the message of the book, the question often asked is, why study Joel?
- B. What relevance to our day are strange phenomena such as locust plagues and military invasions? Why would we want to spend a lot of time and energy poring over this Old Testament book? The reason is because it was meant to be received as a prophetic book to equip end-time forerunners to ***prepare the unprepared*** for the unique dynamics that will occur in the generation in which Jesus returns. We study this three-chapter prophecy because God has uniquely designed its message to prepare the end-time Church for glory and crisis in the Day of the Lord. Joel is a dynamic instruction manual to prepare the Bride of Christ for such a time as this.
- C. In the Lord's kindness, He has given this book as a preparatory tool to equip the generation living at the Lord's return for the heightened scope of glory *and* crisis they will encounter.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF JOEL'S MESSAGE

- A. Joel 1 – a natural disaster (agricultural crisis)
- B. Joel 2:1-11 – a military crisis (Babylonian invasion of Israel as a type of the Antichrist's empire)
- C. Joel 2:12-17 – the response that God requires in order to release protection and blessing
- D. Joel 2:18-31 – the breakthrough of God's blessing (agriculturally, militarily, spiritually)
- E. Joel 3 – God's punishment of His enemies (end-time Gentile nations attacking Israel)

III. PREMISE #1: ACTS 2 INTERPRETS JOEL 2

- A. On the day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus were gathered together in one place, eagerly waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit as they tarried in Jerusalem until they received power from on high (Acts 1:4). For ten days they had been together, seeking the Lord with ardent intercession and, undoubtedly, dimensions of fasting (Acts 1:14).

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:14)

² ***Suddenly*** there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:2-4)

1. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind filled the house and each disciple beheld tongues of fire resting on everyone (Acts 2:1-4). As they began to speak in other tongues, their sound was heard throughout the surrounding area and God-fearing Jews from every nation who were gathered in Jerusalem began to hear the sounds of their own languages being spoken.
 2. Though there were many different nations and languages represented, each one began to hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their own tongue from the mouths of these Galileans! A bewildered and amazed crowd gathered around the followers of Jesus. They were extremely perplexed by what they were hearing and seeing.
- B. Peter, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, interpreted to those gathered that what was happening was certainly not due to wine, but to the fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Joel—that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:29). Drawing a connection between their continual prayer and the sudden release of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders, Peter announced, “This is that which the prophet Joel spoke of!”
- This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*¹⁷ “It shall come to pass in the last days ... that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:16-17)**
- C. We are familiar with this story of Pentecost and the early church. We know its events—the Holy Spirit’s outpouring upon His Church—to be the very core of the glory of the new covenant; His indwelling and the anointing to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth is the glorious gift of God.
- D. This was just the ***downpayment*** of something that God is going to do globally in the generation in which the Lord returns. What began with three thousand believers gathered in Jerusalem two thousand years ago ***will escalate to global dimensions at the end of the age***. What started in one location will culminate in a mighty breakthrough of the Holy Spirit that will extend to fullness—***touching all flesh***.
- E. Acts 1-2 was meant to be understood as a model of how God’s Spirit will be poured out. This followed the Joel 2:12-17 pattern. This outpouring will be available upon the ***entire Church***. Joel prophesies that the Holy Spirit will encounter and draw people from all nations to Jesus as He brings His Church to fullness. Joel prophesies that the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh extending also to unbelievers who call on Jesus’ name. That hour is yet to come. Its comprehensive fulfillment has not yet been seen.

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy (Acts 2:17)

It shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

- F. Alongside this revival, Joel also describes a great ***crisis on all Gentile nations in Joel 3***. Throughout history, God's prophets have spoken of an hour of calamity coming to the planet. Jesus called it the Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Jer. 30:7; Mt. 24:21). Joel 3 also points to judgment on the nations in the generation in which the Lord returns. The unfolding of the future historical realities of Joel 2-3 are God-given road marks.
- G. There is coming an unprecedented release of revival far surpassing what happened in the book of Acts. What will happen at the end of the age will include the fullness of what Jesus prophesied: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and ***greater works than these he will do***, because I go to My Father." (Jn. 14:12).
- H. The three chapters of the book of Joel work together as a clear prophetic picture, containing an intricately connected message for the greatest hour of human history. This is when the Lord pours out His Spirit across the whole earth and simultaneously shakes everything that can be shaken. This two-fold eschatological crescendo, including both positive and negative events (Joel 2:11), is the premier message of Joel. This message is of utmost significance to our day.
- I. Going deep in the book of Joel is essential for the Body of Christ today because of the undeniable relevance of its message for the critical hour of history in which we are living. Although we are not yet in this crisis, it is only moments away (possibly several decades).

IV. PREMISE #2: ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT OF JOEL'S PROPHECIES ARE FUTURE

- A. The book of Joel was written for Joel's day, yet the larger scope of the message is for this current day. This message serves to make people ready for what they will experience before the second coming of Jesus. We cannot neglect this provision from the Lord. We cannot allegorize this book away as a message meant only for another day and lose the strength of its meaning and purpose in the process. It is critical that we go deep in it.
- B. My purpose is not to discuss the different positions of the various scholarly points of view. Rather, I focus on giving the conclusions. The positions or insights to which I hold are seen in various commentaries. In other words, they are shared by various commentators who see the ultimate fulfillment of Joel's prophecies as occurring in the generation when the Lord returns.
- C. I interpret the book of Joel in a way that has an ultimate, *literal* fulfillment through future events. The negatives of Joel 2:1-9 were partially fulfilled in Joel's day, but will also have a future fulfillment in the generation in which the Lord returns.
- D. I appreciate human scholarship that does not deny the revelation of the Holy Spirit and the power of His activity being manifest at the end of the age.

V. JOEL PROPHESED JUST PRIOR TO THE BABYLONIAN'S INVASION (606-586 BC)

- A. The dating of this prophecy has been debated by scholars for generations, resulting in three common views. The most convincing view is that this book was written in the generation just prior to Babylon's invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem in 606-586 BC.
- B. One of the most important dates in Old Testament history is 586 BC. At this time, Israel underwent the darkest and most devastating period in its history in the Old Testament. The Babylonian army, under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, decimated Israel. Nebuchadnezzar took the vast majority of Israel's population into Babylonian "work camps" for seventy years (Jer. 25:9-14; 29:10).
- C. Moses foretold exactly what would happen in the Babylonian invasion, which occurred a few decades after Joel's ministry. The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem took place in 586 BC. The same thing happened again in 70 AD when the Romans came against Jerusalem. Once more Moses' words were fulfilled precisely. Yet these words have not yet reached the end of their fulfillment. The dreadful prophecies spoken by Moses will see their ultimate fulfillment in the end times. What happened with Babylon in 586 BC and with Rome in 70 AD foreshadowed what will happen in the generation in which the Lord returns. An evil empire at the end of the age will arise and come against the nation of Israel in a way that will exceedingly surpass all other hours of tribulation.
- D. In understanding the 70-year period (in which Israel was in captivity in Babylon), we have a foundation to better understand the Old Testament prophets. Many of them were either preparing Israel for the military invasions of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army, or they were looking back and interpreting it as a picture of future judgment and then deliverance at the end of the age (Zech. 12-14; Ezek. 38-39; Jer. 16).
- E. The Babylonian invasion was described (Joel 2:1-9) by Joel possibly a decade or two before it occurred. Joel described an invasion of Israel that was intended to picture devastation that would occur several times. The first instance related to Joel's generation (by Babylon) and the second, to invasion by the armies of the Antichrist just before Jesus returns (Zech. 13:8-14:2; Rev. 13).
- F. God's purpose in Joel 2:1-9 was more than giving us a historical record of a past calamity; it serves also as a prophetic picture of the greatest shaking in Israel's history that will happen at the end of the age. Babylon's military invasion in 586 BC was foreshadowing greater invasions (70 AD, then the final one at the end of the age). The most severe invasion of Israel will come in the final generation by the Antichrist's evil worldwide empire (Zech. 12-14).
- G. God's purpose in giving us Joel 3 was to give us a picture of the ***greatest deliverance of Israel*** and the ultimate ***destruction of her enemies***. This was partially fulfilled when Babylon was defeated. However, the ultimate picture of this will be when the Antichrist's evil worldwide empire is defeated at the end of the Armageddon campaign (Rev. 19:11-21).

- H. God repeatedly pointed to the exodus from Egypt as a picture of His deliverance, as He pointed to the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC as a picture of His judgment. Both are standards in Old Testament theology and give us a picture of judgment and deliverance coming to Israel in the end times.
- I. Joel carries both messages. First, God's judgment on rebellious Israel who refuses God's mercy (Joel 1:1-2:9). Second, judgment on Israel's reprobate enemies in order to deliver Israel (Joel 3). God will once again deliver His people just as He did in Moses' time; and He will once again use an evil leader (Antichrist), as He used Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 1. The book of Joel has an application for the end-time agricultural, economic, and military crisis. The nations will also witness the release of the Holy Spirit beyond what happened in the book of Acts.
 - 2. This final fulfillment of Joel's prophecy will include the Joel 1 locust plague (agricultural and economic crisis, Rev. 8), the Joel 2 military invasion (Zech. 12-14), and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- J. In the end times, God's people will experience the greatest heights of victory in the midst of the greatest hour of pressure and persecution. *It will be our finest hour.*

VI. HABAKKUK AND ZEPHANIAH ALSO PROPHESED OF THE BABYLONIAN INVASION

- A. God raised up other prophets who prophesied in Israel around the time of Joel's generation. They were ***Habakkuk and Zephaniah***. Each of these three small prophetic books, Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, are similar in their language and message of God's judgment on rebellious Israel by Babylon. They each urgently cried, "Trouble is coming to those who refuse God's love and mercy. Cry to God for mercy and return to Him in repentance with fasting and prayer!"
- B. I assume these three were friends, each participating in this difficult assignment of warning a prosperous and religious nation that great trouble was coming soon. Few listened to them.
- C. ***Jeremiah and Ezekiel*** came soon after them, possibly a decade or so later, yet preceding the Babylonian invasion. Isaiah and Micah also prophesied this about 100 years earlier.
- D. The Church today should note how unpopular the message of the prophets has always been. These prophets of old, with their seemingly irrelevant message, are much like today's forerunner messengers who are called to prepare the way for the second coming of the Lord. End-time forerunners are in a similar position to Joel in his day.
- E. We are possibly decades away from a global drama that culminates with the second coming of Jesus. If this is so, then we are at the beginning of the beginning of the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit and pressure in all history.

- F. The Lord often gives a prophetic warning several decades ahead of time to prepare the people.
- G. The role of forerunners is to sound the trumpet to gather the people to solemn assemblies to cry out for mercy and to warn of the coming shaking.
 - 1. The Western world is experiencing a degree of economic prosperity with much religious activity. Yet, the Lord's message to us is that things are to change before long.
 - 2. As this happens, the significance of the message of the forerunner will be obvious. Just as when the Babylonian army approached Israel and the words of Joel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah suddenly held tremendous weight for the Jewish people, so the Lord will cause voices to arise before the great glory and crisis of the generation of the Lord's return and their message will begin to be heeded as the second coming draws near.

VII. PREMISE #3: GOD USES EVIL LEADERS AND MILITARY INVASION

- A. One of God's methods, as seen through the Old Testament prophets, is to judge rebellious nations through *military invasions*. God often raises up wicked men and evil nations as His instruments of judgment against other wicked nations (Hab. 1).
- B. Our religious thinking is offended by the idea of a military crisis sent by God. Daniel taught that, "God removes kings and raises up kings..." (Dan. 2:21). God sets the boundary lines that limit the actions of earthly rulers. Satan also acts inside the perimeters that God sets for him.
- C. We see this principle in the life of Job. Satan wanted to kill Job and his faith, but God put boundary lines on Satan.
- D. The righteous end up with a radiant heart and with even more physical blessings than before.
- E. God *raises up* evil leaders and nations to be His tool of judgment to other rebellious leaders and their nations. Those who do not agree with that will usually admit that God *allows* but does not actually *cause* evil leaders to invade other rebellious nations to cause them to cry out to God.
- F. The people of Joel's day surely struggled to receive Joel's interpretation of God's leadership in sending the Babylonian invasion because of their rebellion.
- G. This is an alarming truth about God's zeal for righteousness. It will cause a severe theological crisis in the Body of Christ to arise, as many questions come to the surface.

VIII. PREMISE #4: THE COMING THEOLOGICAL CRISIS – THREE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come... (Rev. 11:18)

Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. (Mt. 11:6)

The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. (Jer. 23:20)

- A. When God's judgments increase in the land, a theological crisis emerges in the earth. There will be many questions that arise. However, I identify three questions that leaders in the Body of Christ must answer. These questions are not new; God's shepherds have always had to answer them. The questions relate to how God judges rebellious nations.
- B. **Question #1:** If God is a God of love, why will He allow this?
1. The most common question that God's people grapple with is: How can a God of love *allow* and even *raise up* evil nations to be the rod of discipline? It was this tension that Habakkuk wrestled through when he cried to the Lord, "***Why do You look on those who deal treacherously [Babylonian armies], and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?***" (Hab. 1:13).
 2. In essence Habakkuk prayed, "Lord, how can You say that You are righteous when You use the evil nation of Babylon to judge rebellious Israel who is not as wicked?"
 3. **Answer #1:** The answer is found in understanding God's heart. The God of love has no contradiction in His personality when He brings judgment to stop rebellious nations from oppressing people and to wake them up spiritually so that they may also be saved. His goal is to remove everything that hinders love, because of His all-consuming love. God's judgments result in people learning righteousness (Isa. 26:9).
- C. **Question #2:** What can the righteous do to stop or minimize God's judgment?
- I sought for a man among them who would ... stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it. (Ezek. 22:30)*
- If My people ... will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chr. 7:14)*

1. What role are we the saints to play in this drama?
 2. **Answer #2:** It has to do with our God-given role as intercessors as Joel describes (Joel 2:12-17). God calls us to stand in the gap and ask Him to remove, or at least minimize, His judgments (Joel 2:13-14).
- D. **Question #3:** What do the righteous say and do before and after God's judgments?
1. What do we say before and after these judgments occur? What do we call people to do?
 2. **Answer #3:** A careful study of the book of Joel gives us answers. God has answers to these questions and He will strengthen His people with understanding about Himself. Such knowledge will settle the human heart in the time of crisis. As Isaiah said, "Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times..." (Isa. 33:6).

IX. PREMISE #5: THE END-OF-THE-AGE FORERUNNER MINISTRY

- A. When trouble comes, God is sometimes accused—even by His people. These accusations must be answered with the truth about God's heart. He is perfect in love and wisdom and is just in all His ways (Rev. 15:3-4). We can be filled with confidence in God's tender mercy when we understand His heart.
- B. Satan desires to plant lies about God in our hearts. One of God's answers is to raise up forerunners who will prepare the people so they do not accuse God in the coming crisis.

X. PREMISE #6: THE NEED TO BE IMMersed IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

He said to me, "Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. He said to me "fill your stomach with this scroll." So I ate it, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness. (Ezek. 3:1-3)

I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book [similar to Ezekiel's scroll]." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it [meditated on it to understand it], and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. When I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, "You must prophesy ... about many ... nations ... and kings." (Rev. 10:9-11)

- A. God is bringing forth those who understand His heart of love in the midst of judgment like Ezekiel and John did; they will eat the scroll (or meditate on the message) in its sweetness and its bitterness.
- B. The sweetness of this message is what God sovereignly accomplishes in His love and mercy. It is also bitter because of the *real* human pain involved.

- C. The Lord is raising up men and women like Joel, digesting the message thoroughly, including both the sweet and the bitter dimensions. The greatest revival and crisis in history is coming. The Church will be prepared with forerunners who have stood in the counsel of the Lord, those who have “eaten the scroll” of His Word and thus have strong understanding of what the Scripture says about the generation in which the Lord returns.
- D. The point of immersing our lives in the message of the book of Joel is to produce confidence in our hearts in God’s love and wisdom and to dislodge all accusations against God. Moreover, it is to partner with the Spirit in proclaiming the truth of God’s heart to others, thus replacing Satan’s lies for truth, causing offense towards God to be replaced with love and trust.
- E. The role of the forerunner is to establish hearts in confident love before a God of love who has no contradiction in His personality as He releases the end-time judgments. God is now raising up forerunners—people from all over the earth who will give themselves now to digesting His scroll, the prophetic Scriptures.
- F. In doing this we become a voice rather than an echo in the coming hour of crisis. Then with understanding, we help others to make sense of what is happening by speaking truth.
- G. In that day, forerunners will be voices preparing the Lord’s people for His return and the unique dynamics related to it. One way that forerunners prepare the way of the Lord’s return is by dislodging the accusations against God in the hearts of others.

Session 2: The Day of the Lord

I. THE DAY OF THE LORD THEME OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)

Blow the trumpet in Zion ... for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand. (Joel 2:1)

For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

The coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Joel 2:31)

For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

- A. The primary theme of the book of Joel is the “*day of the Lord*,” which is mentioned four times (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14).
- B. The Day of the Lord is a significant timing indicator in understanding the structure of the book of Revelation and the timeline of end-time activity.

II. DEFINITION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

- A. One of the prominent themes in the Old and New Testament prophets is the Day of the Lord. It is also referred to as “*that day*” or “*the great day*.” The phrase “Day of the Lord” or phrases that speak of it such as “the Day” or “the great Day” are found in Scripture nearly 100 times. These phrases are in the Old Testament approximately 80 times.
- B. It is “His Day” because He displays His sovereign leadership for all to see. In showing His power and wisdom in this way, it is *His day*, and thus, “The Day of the Lord.” God’s normal mode of leadership over the earth is to patiently restrain His greater judgments against sin (2 Pet. 3:9; Eccl. 8:11). Rarely has God altered His usual mode of operation by breaking into the natural realm to confront rebellion openly on a large scale. These open demonstrations of His zeal are seen in both revival and the release of the judgments of God.
- C. The Day of the Lord is a unique period of time in history when God’s blessing and judgments are openly manifest in an exceptional way. In other words, it is a unique time frame in history (Kairos hour). It speaks of a special time when God’s blessings or judgments are actively poured out in a heightened way. He displays His power and victory over that which persists in opposing Him. He manifests His zeal in the natural realm, calling nations to account for rebellion against Him, and He visits His people with unusual Holy Spirit power and blessing.

- D. This day indicates a unique time frame *when God acts with unusual manifestations of power for His people and against His enemies*. His enemies are oppressors who persist in refusing His love and mercy and in rebelling against Him. This is the time when God manifests Himself as the Warrior-King going to war against sin as He decisively intervenes against His enemy. The Warrior-King openly battles against His oppressors as He delivers and vindicates His people.
- E. For the primary passages in the Old and New Testaments see Isa. 2:10-22; 4:1-6; 11:1-15; 13:6-9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obad. 15; Zeph 1:7, 12, 14-18, 20; Zech. 14:1-4; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thes. 5:2-3; 2 Thes. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:17.

III. THE TWOFOLD NATURE OF “GOD’S DAY” – GREAT AND TERRIBLE

For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

I will send you Elijah ... Before ... the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Mal. 4:5)

- A. The twofold nature of the day of the Lord is that it is both great in power for the redeemed and terrible in judgment for those who persist in rebellion. These are two dimensions of God’s leadership in the day of the Lord as He manifests His *greatness of blessing* and the *terribleness of judgment*. Isaiah calls it the *year of favor and the day of God’s vengeance* (Is. 61:1-3).
- B. **Great Day** – to the redeemed it will be the time of the greatest manifestation of the power of God ever seen in history. It will include supernatural provision, direction (Ps. 91; Jer. 31:9), and protection (Goshen principle of Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 6, 26), and miracles seen in the book of Acts and the book of Exodus will be combined and multiplied on a global scale. God’s blessing is more fully manifest in the millennial kingdom. The “great” dimension of that Day will include the outpouring of the Spirit with extraordinary signs and wonders (Joel 2:28-32).
- C. **Very Terrible Day** – to the rebellious it will be the most severe time of God’s judgments ever seen in history (Rev. 6-20). It is a day of destruction of the Antichrist’s worldwide empire. The terrible dimension of the Day of the Lord speaks of God’s judgments against the Antichrist’s empire as He shakes all that can be shaken (Heb. 12:26). It will consist of the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls judgments (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16-19). Different passages give us varying pictures into this terrible time. For example, Zechariah 13:8-9, emphasizes the destruction that will come to the nation of Israel in their end-time rebellion. Zechariah 14 focuses on the military invasion of rebellious Jerusalem in the end times.
- D. Throughout Scripture, God uses two primary Old Testament events as central stories to illustrate the two aspects of the activities of the Day of the Lord. The story of **Moses in Exodus** is a picture of the “great” aspect with God’s miraculous deliverance for those who call on Him. The **Babylonian military invasion in 586 BC** portrays the “terrible” aspects of God’s judgments against persistent rebellion. What we see in these two examples is meant to teach us the primary principles related to the end-time judgment and blessing.

1. **Positive** – the book of Exodus gives insight into the miracles that will be released when God delivers end-time Israel who repents.
 2. **Negative** – the Babylonian invasion pictures the judgment on end-time Israel who rebels
 3. These two events teach us God's principles related to both the end-time blessing and judgments of God. Repeatedly, Scripture speaks of them, as if to say, "Let the deliverance that God's worked through Moses show you the quality of His delivering power and let the Babylonian invasion make known the manner of His zeal to confront persistent rebellion and oppression." By understanding the issues of these two historical realities, we are more prepared to understand God's deliverance and judgment related to the final Day of the Lord.
- E. Israel in end-time prophecy is the focus of the day of the Lord by Old Testament prophets.
- F. The principle is that ***God will use the least severe means to bring the greatest numbers to Himself at the deepest levels of love*** for Jesus without violating anyone's free will.

IV. EXPRESSIONS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD IN HISTORY – GLOBAL & LOCAL SCALE

- A. ***Global and ultimate Day*** – occurs once related to the second coming (Joel 2:18-3:21)
- B. ***Local and lesser day*** – occurs various times through history (Joel 1:1-2:11)
- C. Some Old Testament times of judgment are called the day of the Lord. These days point to a future Day at the end of the age when similar judgments will be released with greater intensity.
- D. The positive aspects of the day of the Lord are seen in end-time revival and the millennial kingdom.
- E. The Old Testament prophets teach us that the "day of the Lord" occasions in Israel's history picture the final Day of the Lord. The ultimate Day of the Lord will be a global time of revival and judgment at the end of the age. It is called a great and awesome Day of which the lesser days, such as the locust plague and the Babylonian invasion, were prophetic pictures to foreshadow future evens (Joel 2:31).
- F. Israel's end-time crisis at the hand of the Antichrist will exceed the previous military conflicts in their history. This military invasion will far surpass the Babylonian devastation of Joel 2:1-9.
- Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst.² For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:1-2)***

- G. In God's divine strategy, a global conflict will mount alongside a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The worst days and the best days for planet earth are yet ahead of us.

V. THREE "DAYS OF THE LORD" IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. We see three "days of the Lord" in the book of Joel. First, in Joel 1, we see the agricultural crisis (Joel 1:15). Second, in Joel 2, we see the Babylonian military invasion of Israel (Joel 2:1, 11). Third, in Joel 3, we see God's blessing on Israel and judgment on the Antichrist's empire (Joel 2:31; 3:14).
- B. There was a progression of judgment in the book of Joel involving three different time frames referred to as the "day of the Lord." These 3 "days" are all associated with a catastrophe that affected Israel. The first "day of the Lord" involved an agricultural crisis caused by a locust plague (Joel 1:4-12), accompanied by a drought (Joel 1:16-20) and raging fires (Joel 1:19-20). The second was a military crisis. The Babylonian army invaded Israel (Joel 1:1-2:9). The third Day of the Lord referred to by Joel pointed to God's activity at the end of the age (Joel 2:18-3:21). This Day of the Lord crisis is seen in the book of Revelation (Rev. 6:17). Thus, all three Day of the Lord descriptions must be studied together to get a complete picture.
- C. The crisis in Joel's day became progressively worse. The agricultural crisis (Joel 1:1-19) was followed by a military crisis (Joel 2:1-9). This agricultural devastation brought Israel to the brink of starvation as four waves of locusts destroyed Israel's food. As the people and animals died, disease broke out. The entire population was threatened. The locust plague crisis probably lasted three to five years (Joel 1:15; 2:25a). As the negative impact of the agricultural locust plague was passing, the word of the Lord came again to Joel. This time God spoke about a coming Babylonian military invasion. This was far more severe than the agricultural conflict. The locust plague was still fresh in everyone's mind because the negative effects were still felt in the land. It was at this time that Joel called the people to a solemn assembly of prayer with fasting (Joel 1:14). Why did it come in three stages? God wanted to give Israel time to repent before the next invasion came. Why? Because repentance could minimize some of the lingering fallout from the agricultural crisis, as well as stop the coming military invasion. Unfortunately, Israel did not repent. Joel may have prophesied about this for ten to twenty years before it began. God's judgments sometimes gradually intensify, so as to give those who persist in rebellion the opportunity to repent before the next wave of judgment comes.

- D. In Joel 1, the prophet gave an account of the three dimensions of natural disaster that had come upon Israel: the locust invasion (Joel 1:4), drought (Joel 1:17-20), and raging fires that followed the drought (Joel 1:19-20). All of Israel's life resources were being threatened by this progressive crisis, and things were not looking better—the devastations were not letting up. They assumed their current disaster would soon pass. Yet Joel cries out, in essence, “No! It is going to get way worse! The locust plague turned into a drought! Then raging fires came! Our land is destroyed, yet the worst is not over! It's only going to escalate!” God sent Joel into the midst of the confused people to bring understanding as to why the crisis was growing and not subsiding. After describing the great national crisis—the absence of wine and oil, the ruined grain, the withered land, the despondency of the people—Joel proclaims a horrifying thing; He tells the people that God was the author of the desolations (Joel 1:15). He goes on to tell them the calamity will get worse (Joel 2:1-9) because the Lord wants His people to turn to Him. The crisis would surely continue and even increase *until* God's desired effect took place.
- E. The second day of the Lord that Joel prophesied was the Babylonian invasion of Israel (Joel 2:1-9). The Babylonians deported almost the entire Jewish population to Babylon. They marched over 700 miles through the desert to Babylon (modern Iraq), to be put into work camps. The locust crisis lasted a few years, yet the Babylonian crisis lasted 70 years (Jer. 25:9-14; 29:10). The Babylonian military invasion came in three different waves (606, 597, 586 BC) over 20 years. After each invasion, Israel was in greater difficulty (economic, agricultural, social, etc.). That “day” was a *twenty-year* military crisis in which God judged Israel's persistent rebellion.

VI. WE STUDY THE LESSER DAYS OF THE LORD TO UNDERSTAND THE GREAT DAY

- A. Each of these three distinct Days reaches a greater intensity of judgment and/or blessing and portrays different expressions of the final Day of the Lord. All three must be studied together to get the complete picture.
- B. The many “local and lesser days of the Lord” teach us about the one “global and ultimate Day.”
- C. The judgments in the “lesser days” are statements beneficial to teaching us about God's mercy. With these lesser days, God documents in history His zeal against oppression and rebellion and His willingness to show mercy in releasing revival and blessing. The history of revivals is an inspiring record of God breaking in when His people respond in repentance and prayer.
- D. As we study the lesser days of the Lord in Joel or in history (Nazi Germany), we can gain understanding of the final Day of the Lord. The lesser days of the Lord through history are a part of God's historical preparation of His end-time Church. He has not left us unaware of His ways. He does not leave us to guess what response He wants in order to grant favor. History tells the story. What He has done in the past, He will do again.

- E. During times of judgment, many are filled with fear and confusion asking, “What? Who? When? And, where? Where is God? What are we supposed to do? What is going on?” Many will be confused. However, we do not need to be confused because we have a record in Scripture of what God wants us to do in times of judgment.
- F. God never changes. Therefore, His way of dealing with His people is made clear. We have clarity, knowing what God is doing and how He wants us to respond.

VII. WORLD WAR II IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LESSER DAY OF THE LORD IN HISTORY

- A. Israel has experienced other great crises that were orchestrated by God, thus constituting a day-of-the-Lord judgment. For example, in 70 AD the Roman army brutally invaded Israel. The result was the destruction of Jerusalem.
- B. The trauma of World War II gives insight into some of the horrors of the final Day of the Lord.
- C. Nazi Germany’s invasion of various European nations gives insight into the Antichrist’s military invasions. In January 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power. Most Germans were not alarmed as to the evil that Hitler was capable of. Few saw the implications of where this new government was going. Six years later, it led to the start of World War II (Sept. 1, 1939). At that time, no one imagined that within another six years **50 million human beings would die**. It seemed inconceivable that Germany, one of the most cultured nations, would set into motion a military crisis that resulted in such an unprecedented death toll. It all happened so suddenly. What happened would have been unthinkable only a few short years before World War II started.
- D. What suddenly happened in World War II serves as a warning of how quickly something of such magnitude can unfold. The horrors that drastically affected much of Europe and parts of Asia in the 1940s picture for us the crisis that will touch the entire globe before the second coming.
- E. The Holocaust also proves that anti-Semitism can suddenly escalate and spread across nations.
- F. The Church of our day is as disconnected with the reality that a great shaking is coming as the people of Europe were just before the horrors of Nazi Germany began. As part of my preparation to understand what is coming, I have sought to understand aspects of World War II.

VIII. THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL DAY OF THE LORD – NARROW AND BROAD

- A. The end-of-the-age Day of the Lord is both a one-time event when Jesus enters Jerusalem to be crowned King, and a series of events starting with the Great Tribulation and extending for the 1,000 years of the millennial kingdom.
- B. **Narrow Day of the Lord** – refers to the 24-hour day when Jesus returns to Jerusalem

- C. ***Broad Day of the Lord*** – refers to the period when God’s blessing and judgments are released in an exceptional way. It begins in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week at the first seal and includes the blessing and judgment events of the Great Tribulation. It includes the second coming, the judgment of the Gentile nations, and continues through the millennial reign of Jesus over all the earth for 1,000 years (Rev. 20). It also includes God’s judgment on the final revolt of the nations at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9) and the cleansing of the present heavens and earth with fervent heat (Is. 65:17-19; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The broad Day of the Lord continues for approximately 1,000 years, beginning with the Great Tribulation and continues until the end of the millennial kingdom.
- D. The analogy of a natural day is helpful as it begins in the night, followed by the midnight hours of darkness before the morning light finally dawns. So the Day of the Lord has 3½ years of darkness before the “millennial light of day” breaks forth at the second coming.

IX. THE SECOND COMING: WINDS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A GREAT HURRICANE

- A. Daniel saw the activity of God shifting things in the nations as winds stirring on the sea.
Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea.” (Dan. 7:2-3)
- B. Many events surrounding Jesus’ second coming—before, during, and after—are involved in the Day of the Lord. Think of a great hurricane out at sea that is approaching the coastlands. Imagine that it has 200 mph winds surrounding the center of the storm. The winds will increase and affect the coastland long before the fullness of the eye of the storm reaches land. Think of the center of the storm as the second coming of Jesus.
- C. The winds of judgment and blessing will increase greatly before Jesus’ return as the winds of a hurricane precede the center of the storm that is still out at sea.
- D. There will be a progressive intensity of events, both good and bad. As the winds are on both sides of the center of the storm, so God’s winds of blessing and judgment will be on both sides of Jesus’ coming. The winds will be discernable before and after Jesus returns.
- E. I believe we are at the beginning of the beginning. We still have time to seek God and to go deep in revelation. In my opinion, ***we are in the early days of the generation in which Jesus will return.*** I believe that there are people alive today who will see the return of Jesus. It may be the 20-year-olds or the 2-year-olds who see it. I do not know with certainty. No one knows this with absolute certainty. This is by God’s design because He wants us to move forward by faith as we search the Word and live in deep connection and relationship with Him through the Spirit.
- F. The winds preceding the Lord’s appearing will cause a great shaking of all things.

Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.²⁷ Now this ... indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken ... that the things which cannot be shaken may remain ...²⁸ We are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken... (Heb 12:26-28)

- G. There will be a great disruption in the nations just before and immediately after Jesus' appearing. Some nations will be eliminated as Jesus, the King of kings, puts the nations in order. Many geographic changes will occur before and after He returns. All the events surrounding the second coming—before, during, and after—are involved in the Day of the Lord.

X. DAY OF THE LORD: PARTIAL, SUBSTANTIAL, AND ULTIMATE

- A. Partial – in various times in history, like in Joel's generation
- B. Substantial – in the Great Tribulation which initiates the Day-of-the-Lord judgments
- C. Ultimate – in the Great White Throne judgments which ends the Day of the Lord

XI. THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: "LIKE KIND, BUT LESSER DEGREE"

- A. Joel described the blessing and judgment of the day of the Lord for Israel. Understanding this is relevant for us because of the principle that I call ***"like kind, but lesser degree."*** The glory and judgment that God releases to the nation of Israel in the millennial kingdom will be given in "like kind, but in lesser degree" to the Church and the Antichrist's empire in this age. The same manifestations of God's power that will manifest in Israel in the millennial kingdom will also be seen in the Church worldwide in this age, yet in a lesser degree. It is the same with the judgments of God. The judgments that Israel will endure will be manifest in Gentile nations that persist in rebelling against God, but in lesser degree. ***Israel will receive the most severe judgment for their rebellion and the greatest degree of blessing in their repentance.*** Jesus will set up His throne in Jerusalem and rule all the nations from there (Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 6:12-13).
- B. The remnant of Israel will have a spirit of glory resting upon them that will surpass the rest of the Church in the earth, especially after the second coming. Israel's judgment will be more severe, but their glory will be greater.
- C. When the Old Testament prophets, including the prophet Joel, prophesied the day of the Lord, their focus was nearly always on Israel. Occasionally, we find a few references in the Bible regarding the day of the Lord for the Gentile nations (Isa. 13; 24-27).
- D. We study how the blessing and judgment of the Day of the Lord will touch Israel. We gain insight into the blessing and judgment that Gentile believers and unbelievers will experience. It will be in like kind, but in lesser degree.

- E. The Day of the Lord crisis that is seen in the book of Joel is centered on Israel, but we need to apply it to our nation, knowing there is a parallel crisis coming to the Antichrist's empire that involves military invasions and agricultural crisis (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16).

- F. Some theologians have what I call "***selective theology***" in relation to Israel. They apply the scriptural promises of blessing given to Israel to the modern Church, yet leave the judgment prophecies to be fulfilled only in Israel. We study Joel knowing that what will happen to Israel, good and bad, will happen in part to the nations of the earth as well.

Session 3: The Great and Very Terrible Day

I. REVIEW OF THE TWOFOLD NATURE OF “GOD’S DAY” – GREAT AND TERRIBLE

For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

I will send you Elijah ... Before ... the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Mal. 4:5)

- A. The twofold nature of the Day of the Lord is that it is both great in power for the redeemed and terrible in judgment for those who rebel. These are two dimensions of God’s leadership in the Day of the Lord as He manifests His *greatness of blessing* and the *terribleness of judgment*.
- B. **Great Day** – to the responsive it will be a time of the greatest manifestation of the power of God ever seen in history. It will include supernatural provision, direction (Ps. 91; Jer. 31:9), and protection (Goshen principle of Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 6, 26), and the miracles seen in the book of Acts and in the book of Exodus will be combined and multiplied on a global scale. God’s blessing will be more fully manifest in the millennial kingdom. The “great” dimension of that Day will include the outpouring of the Spirit with extraordinary signs and wonders (Joel 2:28-32).
- C. **Very Terrible Day** – to the rebellious it will be the most severe time of God’s judgments ever seen in history (Rev. 6-20). It is a day of destruction against the Antichrist’s empire. The terrible dimension of the Day of the Lord speaks of God’s judgments coming upon the earth as He shakes all that can be shaken (Heb. 12:26). It will include the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, and the bowl judgments (Rev. 6-16).

II. WHO CAN ENDURE THE DAY OF THE LORD? ONLY THOSE WITH HIS FAVOR

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 asks, “Who can endure the Day of the Lord?” The only kind of people who will endure both the powerful visitation of the Spirit and the judgments are those who live in God’s favor by the gift of righteousness in Christ, along with a life of wholehearted obedience to Him. The free gift of righteousness that we have received from God is our only foundation and it will lead us to a life of wholehearted obedience to God. No one can face this Day in their own strength or on their own account.
- B. The Day of the Lord is when God openly shows Himself as strong, carrying out His promises of blessing and warnings of judgment. He is mighty in bringing to pass the promises as well as the warnings that He declared in His Word. The rebellious ignore the warnings.

- C. Apart from living understanding, called the spirit of revelation (Eph. 1:17), the human heart is naturally offended at both dimensions of the great and terrible Day—the move of the Spirit and the release of judgment.
- D. A pastor came to me after hearing me teach on this subject and said, “You seem to think something dramatic is about to happen. Let’s be honest. I have been in the ministry for so many years, and I have never seen anything like that happen before.” I answered, “I do not limit our future based on the powerlessness and lethargy of our past. Our history in spiritual barrenness must not forecast how we see our future.” We must base our belief system upon the Word of God, not our past lack of experience in God.
- E. The Day of the Lord will be the most dynamic hour in natural history. It is the hour of the greatest glory for the Body of Christ. What God has deemed important, we must also. This Day is certain. It will come to pass. God is inviting us to be a people of understanding, embracing His ways as we partner with Him in agreement with all He is about to do on the earth.

III. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS GREAT

- A. There is only one global great Day of the Lord, and it happens in relation to the second coming of Jesus. It is characterized by a worldwide move of God; the Church across the earth will experience the unusual manifestations of God’s power with His zeal for righteousness. It is a great Day because it will be the greatest demonstration of revival power in world history. There will be a heightened activity of the Holy Spirit’s blessing for the Church. There will be an increase of the winds of the Spirit such as the Body of Christ has never witnessed. It is really good news! The miracles in the books of Acts and Exodus will be combined and multiplied on a global dimension!
- B. In Psalm 91, David describes the fearlessness that the redeemed will have at that time. They will remain unshaken when so much around them will be shaking. The greatness of that Day will be characterized by supernatural provision, protection, and guidance.

IV. SUPERNATURAL PROVISION (FOOD AND WATER)

“As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders.” (Mic. 7:15)

- A. This will be a great Day for God’s people in terms of receiving supernatural provision. God will manifest His provision like He did in the Exodus. The premier example of God’s extravagant provision in crisis is found in the book of Exodus when God brought Israel out of Egypt. God miraculously provided all the needs of His people as they journeyed through the wilderness. He caused food to fall from the sky and He brought water from a rock in the desert. Jehovah-Jireh, the great Provider, was on magnificent display as He exhibited His kindness time and time again. The Exodus story will be *our* story because it is going to happen again!

- B. We will be filled with amazement at the different ways in which the Lord provides food and water. Water can again flow from a rock at the Lord's command. Those refusing the mark of the Beast will be unable to purchase food (Rev. 13:17), but they will be led by the same Jesus who fed five thousand with the fish and the loaves. He also fed Elijah by the ravens. In other words, He is in the business of *food multiplication*; He will do it again—only in greater measures than ever witnessed before.

V. **SUPERNATURAL PROTECTION – GOSHEN PRINCIPLE (POCKETS OF MERCY)**

I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land. 23 I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be. (Ex. 8:22-23)

Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail. (Ex. 9:26)

- A. Another characteristic of the greatness of the Day of the Lord is God's supernatural protection. It is what I call the ***Goshen principle*** (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4-6, 26; 10:23; 11:7). In the time of the plagues of Egypt, God did not allow His judgments to touch the place where His people lived, a place called Goshen (Ex. 8:22). God protected His people from the plagues He released in Egypt. The Lord said to Pharaoh, "I will make a difference between My people and your people" (Ex. 8:23). Though the plagues were poured out in Egypt and all around the Israelites, nobody in Goshen was sick or affected, not even their livestock. In Goshen, none of the hail or fire fell, and none of the flies swarmed (Ex. 9:4, 6, 26).
- B. ***Pockets of mercy*** is a term I use to refer to geographic areas where God's people will be hidden or protected from God's judgment in the end times.
- Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden [pockets of mercy] in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:3)***
- C. The same idea of the Goshen principle is seen in Scripture when the mark or seal of God is put on the saints to protect them from the judgment of God.
- They [demons] were commanded not to harm the grass but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9:4)***
- He [angel] cried to the four angels saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." (Rev. 7:2-3)***
- The LORD said to him [angel], "Go ... through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry [intercession] over all the abominations that are done within it." To the others [angels] He said, "Go through the city and kill. Utterly slay old and young ... but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark." (Ezek. 9:4-6)***

- D. This “Goshen principle” will be seen in the end times. There will be strategic regions across the earth with special divine protection, provision, and guidance. In these geographic locations, the judgments of God will be held back from the people of God just like in Goshen.

VI. SUPERNATURAL GUIDANCE (PROPHETIC ANOINTING)

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble. (Jer. 31:9)

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. (Joel 2:28)

Your ears shall hear a [prophetic] word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. (Isa. 30:21)

- A. Another mark of the greatness of the Day of the Lord events will be in receiving supernatural direction. In that Day, the Lord will direct His people to the right and to the left that they may find safety, protection, and provision.
- B. Jeremiah prophesied that there would be a time when Israel would be escaping and fleeing as refugees, that God would lead them by supplications in that day (Jer. 31:9).
- C. God will direct His people to the places of food, water, and refuge. Our ears shall hear a word behind us or suddenly from the Lord, saying, “This is the way, walk in it”. (Isa. 30:21).
- D. There will be supernatural guidance to find food, to reconnect in relationships, to be at the right place at the right time, or to escape a plague.

VII. TERRIBLE DAY – GOD WILL RAISE UP AN EVIL LEADER TO JUDGE SIN

- A. During the Day of the Lord judgments, the Antichrist will invade and oppress nations.
- B. At the foundation of this evil, global empire is the ***great paradox that it is God Himself who will raise it up***. Though, certainly, Satan will have his role in it and the sin of man will play into it. Jesus will open the first seal to release the Antichrist to conquer rebellious nations (Rev. 6:1-2).
- C. God is the one raising up an evil leader to test the inhabitants of the earth who choose evil.
The hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those ... on earth. (Rev. 3:10)
- D. It was the Father, not the devil, who gave men authority over Jesus at His first coming.
Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” (Jn. 19:11)

- E. God raised up evil Pharaoh in Moses' day. He was the most powerful man in the world.
The Scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." (Rom. 9:17)
Indeed ... I have raised you up [Pharaoh] that I may show My power in you. (Ex. 9:16)
- F. God raised up an evil Assyrian leader named Sennacherib to judge Israel in 721 BC.
Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger... the staff in whose hand is My indignation. (Isa. 10:5)
- G. God called Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, to judge Israel in 586 BC.
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will [come] against this land ... and will utterly destroy... 'Then ... when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and the Babylonians, for their iniquity,' says the LORD. (Jer. 25:9, 12)
I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar ... My servant... (Jer. 27:6)
Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will send Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne above these stones..." (Jer. 43:10)
Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans [Babylon], a bitter and hasty nation...they are terrible and dreadful. (Hab. 1:5-7)
I [the Lord] will prepare destroyers against you [Babylon against Jerusalem]. (Jer. 22:7)
- H. God raised up the Persians to judge the Babylonians.
I have commanded My sanctified ones [Persian army]; I have also called My mighty ones [Persian army] for My anger ... a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! The LORD of hosts musters the army for battle. They come from a far country [Persia] ... the LORD and His weapons [Persian army] of indignation, to destroy. (Isa. 13:3-5)
God is a just judge ... He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready. He also prepares for Himself instruments of death... (Ps. 7:11-13)
- I. God sets into place the leaders of the nations to serve His purposes.
This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men. (Dan. 4:17)
God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. (Dan. 5:21)
Be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God ... for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. (Rom. 13:1, 4)

- J. Specific to our study is the testimony of Joel, who prophesied ***that the evil Babylonian army would be sent by God***. Joel calls Babylon God's army (Joel 2:11). In Joel's day, God raised up Nebuchadnezzar, an evil man who blasphemed God. At the end of the age God will raise up the Antichrist to be used to judge the nations that choose wickedness.
- K. God will raise up the Antichrist to a position of great authority for 3½ years to bring the entire earth to a place of decision for righteousness or unrighteousness (Dan. 7-12; 2 Thes. 2; Rev. 13). God will grant time and authority for some of the events of darkness to be walked out (Rev. 6:2, 4, 8; 9:1, 3, 5; 11:2; 13:5, 7, 14-15).
- The Lamb [Jesus] opened one of the seals... a white horse. He [Antichrist] who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him...he went out conquering and to conquer. (Rev. 6:1-2)***
- He [Antichrist] was given... authority [by God] to continue for forty-two months. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. Authority was given him [by God] over every tribe, tongue, and nation. (Rev. 13:5, 7)***
- He [Antichrist] shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High...Then the saints shall be given into his hand [3½ years]. (Dan. 7:25)***
- For indeed I will raise up a shepherd [Antichrist] in the land [Israel] who will not care for those who are cut off ... nor heal those that are broken ... But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. "Woe to the worthless shepherd!" (Zech. 11:16-17)***
- L. There is a distinction between God's judgment and discipline. God releases His wrath to punish rebellion and His discipline to free His people who refuse to repent of their compromise.
- Whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)***
- M. Satan possesses tremendous hostility, desiring to destroy the righteous.
- N. God's judgment and Satan's rage will be happening simultaneously across the earth. We cannot know the mixed responses that occur in the hearts of so many. Therefore, we should not have overly simplistic answers as to the reasons and causes of all the end-time crises events. The general principle is that the rebellious experience God's wrath, compromising believers undergo God's discipline and the righteous endure Satan's rage.
- O. In times of crisis, God judges sin, disciplines the Church, and prepares the harvest. God raises up evil leaders to bring judgment on the rebellious nations, then He judges those wicked leaders. It is essential that we have clarity on the sovereignty of God.

VIII. THE VERY TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD

They worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months ...⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:4-8)

- A. *A divinely appointed evil empire* is one dimension of the terrible Day of the Lord. One of the terrible dimensions of the Day of the Lord is that an evil empire led by the Antichrist will invade rebellious evil nations that oppress God’s people and the poor.
1. God will raise up this temporary evil leader to shake wicked nations. This empire will not succeed in dominating *all* the nations of the earth. However, the Bible repeatedly uses terms like “the whole earth” to describe its influence (Dan. 7:23; Rev. 13:8). Thus, it will have some presence and impact in all the nations without necessarily dominating them.
 2. There are 262 nations (including territories, etc.) on the earth right now. This evil empire may only unify fifty or one hundred nations, yet that will still be the largest coalition of nations in history! Many nations will resist him and some will prevent him from totally dominating their land, while still feeling the impact of his oppression.
- B. God’s judgment will be released through the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath (Rev. 6:16) as a dimension of the final Day of the Lord against the kingdom of darkness and the Antichrist’s empire. These will include earthquakes, storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and drought.
- C. The sowing and reaping process of sin will cause troubles on the earth. God will allow seeds of wickedness to fully ripen on the earth; sin will reach its highest dimensions at the end of the age. Sin has never been fully ripe globally. However, God will give the human race the opportunity to reach its fullest potential of sinfulness as it reaches heights of perversion, unequalled in history.
- D. The four primary categories of sin in end times will be murder, immorality, sorcery and theft (Rev. 9:21).
1. Today the soil of America is defiled with the blood of 50 million abortions over the last 30 years. Yet, the “***murder-movement***” has only just begun as millions possessed by demons of murder bring the crime rates to an all-time high.
 2. Internet ***perversion*** will reach new levels of darkness in the days to come. Satan will use all the resources of technology to bring sexual perversion to the most wickedly corrupt levels. There will be millions and millions of people possessed by demons of lust.

3. The **occult** will fill the earth, resulting in millions of demonized people.
4. **Theft** will increase to dramatic proportions. Most wars are about theft. There are many different manifestations of theft that man calls “protecting our political interest.”
- E. In the natural process of reaping and sowing, all of these categories of sin will crescendo. Talk about an unsafe environment! It truly will be a very terrible day.

IX. RESULTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD JUDGMENTS

The four angels ... were released to kill a third of mankind. (Rev. 9:15)

- A. One result of the Day of the Lord judgments is that one-third of the earth’s population will die unnatural deaths. Their deaths will be related to the release of God’s judgment.
- B. People who study demographics say that by about 2025, there will be 8 billion people in the earth. A third of that number would be between 2 and 3 billion people. We cannot relate to such a large number. It would be about fifty times the death toll of World War II (50 million).

X. GOD’S GOODNESS IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God... (Rom. 8:28)

- A. All these things will work together for the good of the redeemed and the future of the earth. **God will use the least severe means to bring the greatest numbers to Himself at the deepest levels of love** for Jesus without violating their free will. Anything of less severity would not get the job done. Reflecting back on the Great Tribulation judgments, the saints in heaven will sing, “Great and marvelous are Your works and just and true are Your ways!” (Rev. 15:3-4).
- B. After Joseph was reunited with his brothers who sold him into slavery, he understood that what his brothers meant for evil, God meant for good, saving many (Gen. 50).
You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. (Gen. 50:20)
- C. Joseph endured two prison sentences in Egypt. God worked for good through what others meant for evil, that many would be saved. In the same way, the works of the Antichrist’s evil empire will be meant for evil but God will overrule their evil intentions, resulting in salvation for many.

XI. THE CHURCH WILL NOT WANT TO MISS THIS GLORIOUS HOUR OF HISTORY

- A. The Church will be present and victorious through the events described in the book of Revelation. This will be the Church’s most glorious hour in all history!

- B. The glorious outcome will be great numbers coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus. I believe that over a billion souls will be saved. This Day will be characterized by the greatest number of souls ever reached in salvation and distinguished by the deepest levels of mature love.

Session 4: The Primary and Secondary Causes of a National Crisis

I. THE DAY OF THE LORD JUDGMENTS ARE SENT BY GOD

Alas ... For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)

For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

- A. Many in Israel were troubled at Joel's interpretation of the crisis in that day. Joel attributed the locust calamity to God's hand. This surely offended many. The end-time message will be equally offensive to many in the generation in which the Lord returns. This statement shocked the people of Joel's day. In the midst of the crisis, Joel boldly interpreted the crisis as coming from the hand of God. Joel told the people that the locust plague, the drought, the raging fires, the famine, and the starvation were part of the day of the Lord. God was behind all of this, and more was coming.
- B. God does not apologize for His judgments, but takes responsibility for them. He is not pleased when His servants yield to fear and refuse to speak clearly about God's judgments.
- C. Many in Israel interpreted the agricultural crisis as simply a "natural disaster." Joel proclaimed that it came from God's hand (Joel 1:15). Joel prophesied that a military invasion was also coming as a "day-of-the-Lord" judgment (Joel 2:11). Why? God wanted Israel to know that just as the locust invasion was more than a natural disaster, so also, the Babylonian military invasion would be more than a political power play. It was orchestrated from heaven. They were both sent by God to cause a wicked, oppressive, and rebellious nation to repent. After God used Babylon to discipline Israel, God judged Babylon for her wickedness (Isa. 47:4-11; Jer. 25:9-14).
- D. Destruction was coming; thus, God sent Joel to sound the alarm to wake them up. Joel cried out "Alas!" or "Woe!" to the inhabitants of the land. We can feel the pain of Joel's heart in this single word. There was a sense of shock and terror in Joel's heart because he understood what was going to happen. He wanted the crisis to be understood so the people would respond to God. Joel sought to summon the full attention of the people.
- E. Joel described this day as destruction coming from the Almighty. This particular name of God in Hebrew is *El Shaddai* or the all-sufficient God. All Israel understood that this was the covenant name for God. Joel purposefully used this name to define Israel's destruction as coming from El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God of covenant. The One who makes covenant with Israel is the same God who removed His protection and provision because of their persistent rebellion.

F. When the Lord identifies a national crisis as a “day-of-the-Lord judgment,” then He is identifying Himself as the primary orchestrator of the crisis. Neither the locust plague nor the Babylonian invasion was Israel’s greatest problem as long as they continued in sin. ***It was God.*** All the other sources are secondary ones. God’s unrelenting zeal that His people love Him is the real issue. God can easily take care of the armies of men.

G. God called the locust invasion and the evil army of Babylon “His army” because both were instruments that God raised up to discipline Israel.

The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great... (Joel 2:11)

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. (Joel 2:25)

H. God wants His people to know that He is the One who acts in judgment. If the people do not know that God is behind the crisis, then they will not respond to God in the right way.

I. God’s normal mode of leadership over the planet is to restrain His intensified judgments against rebellion so that more people have opportunity to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). However, there are unique times in history when He openly manifests His zeal in judgment, calling the people to account for their persistent rebellion against Him.

J. God fights against His enemies. God’s main enemy is sin. Israel made herself God’s enemy by living in continual, blatant sin (Isa. 63:10). God was at war with the deep sin in Israel. They set themselves in an adversarial relationship with Him.

They rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them. (Isa. 63:10)

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (Jas. 4:4)

K. God’s role in judgment is very controversial, even within the Church. His purpose is to remove everything that hinders love. He takes no pleasure in the judgment (Ezek. 33:11). God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people, at the deepest level of love, without violating anyone’s free will, or His justice.

II. FOUR FACTORS WORKING TOGETHER IN A NATIONAL CRISIS

A. Four factors often overlap and work together in a national crisis—God’s zeal for relationship and to deliver the oppressed, Satan’s rage, man’s sin, and creation’s groan.

B. God’s zeal for relationship leads Him to discipline His people as He removes all that hinders love. God’s zeal to deliver the oppressed leads Him to destroy oppressors.

- C. The second factor contributing to the end-time crisis is Satan's rage. God will allow Satan to vent his fury in the end times more than at any other time in history. God sets the boundaries in which Satan can operate. God both limits it, and permits it to be expressed.

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! for the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time. (Rev. 12:12)

- D. The third factor is the role that man's sin plays. Men act in violence toward one another. They do this to individuals and sometimes to nations, as in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. God has given the human race the dignity of free choice. We can use this for good or for evil. Free will gives us the ability to make real choices that affect real life. For instance, when terrorists use their will for evil, they bring death and destruction to others.

- E. Man's free will provides the legal entry point for both angels and demons to be much more active in the natural realm. When people choose righteousness, they open up legal access for angelic activity into the natural realm. When people choose rebellion towards God, they open up legal entry points for demonic activity to be heightened in the earthly arena. Decisions that we make today affect our life in this age, they affect those around us, and they also affect our life in the age to come—in eternity. What we choose now counts forever.

- F. The fourth contributing factor to pressure in the nations is creation's groan. We see this manifested in earthquakes, violent weather patterns, and more. One reason that earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, and turbulent weather patterns occur, is because creation groans under the weight of man's sin (Rom. 8:21-22). There is a mysterious yet glorious connection between the action of the human race and the condition of the natural creation (land, vegetation, etc.). When Adam sinned, a curse came upon the land (Gen. 3). That curse has been escalating as man's sin escalates. The earth's convulsions will increase as sin ripens in the earth (Isa. 24:5-6, 20).

Creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now ... (Rom. 8:21-22)

The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws ... Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:5-6)

- G. These four factors will work together under God's sovereign and wise leadership. God causes an overlapping of these four realities to work together for good.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God... (Rom. 8:28)

- H. The Church is quick to talk about Satan's role, and even sinful man's role, yet we are hesitant and uncertain about God's role in causing crisis. He is actively involved in the crisis events that affect the nations. Sometimes He causes them in a direct way. At times He works indirectly, allowing other forces to bring about the events.

- I. God's zeal for relationship and zeal to deliver the oppressed is the primary cause. God's zeal is His passion is to remove all that hinders love.
- J. How do the redeemed respond? First, we receive God's correction in humility. Second, we resist Satan's activity by faith. Third, we repent of sin.
- K. Jesus, as the Lamb of God is the primary actor in God's judgment in the book of Revelation.
The Lamb [Jesus] opened ... the seals [of judgment] ... for the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:1, 17)
- L. Jesus, not the devil, breaks open the seven seals around the scroll that release His end-time judgments (Rev. 6). In releasing His judgments, He reveals Himself as the Lamb. The Lamb is the one who poured out His soul to death for the sake of love. Jesus, the Lamb, is the most radical lover of people that has ever lived. He says in effect, "Look at My scars, I am a slain Lamb. I am judging the earth as a Lamb to remove all that hinders love. His judgments will produce love in His people.
- M. The Lord will be deeply involved in the end-time judgments that create crisis across the earth.
I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things. (Isa. 45:7)

If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it? (Amos 3:6)

III. THE MOST TERRIFYING PROBLEM FOR A NATION IN SIN

- A. God is zealous for relationship and to deliver the oppressed; His zeal for righteousness is the most powerful of the four causes of crisis. The biggest problem for a nation living in rebellion is not Satan, nor the violent acts of terrorists, nor even natural disasters. Hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans (Aug. 28-29, 2005) proves that a major city can be shaken in one day.
- B. In His zeal, God raised up Nebuchadnezzar to discipline rebellious Israel in Joel's day.
- C. We must call men to repent and cry out for mercy in the time of God's judgments. The primary response in a national crisis is to seek God's favor. He has ordained solemn assemblies, where nations come together to pray, worship, fast, and repent, as the way to seek His favor. Money cannot buy God's favor and nothing can substitute for it.
- D. God's judgment has many layers of purpose. In human terms, He plays ten-dimensional chess. We do not fully comprehend His ways as He works on multiple levels to achieve many different objectives.

As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything. (Ecc. 11:5)

IV. THE CHURCH IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

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

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:16-18)

- A. The Church, as the covenant people in the land, is the first line of defense. We are the ones most responsible before heaven to cry out and raise the standard against rebellion, oppression, and perversion.
- B. God's requirement in Joel's day was that God's people humble themselves in obedience before Him. This was the same in Solomon's day (2 Chr. 7:14) and is the same today.
Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting ... rend your heart ... return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful ... and He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:12-13)
- C. For three days after September 11, 2001, many prayer rooms across America were full. Disasters cause people to go to places of prayer. Conducting solemn assemblies is a practical thing to do in times before and during crisis. He will release His favor and protection in response to our wholehearted repentance, worship, fasting, and prayer.
- D. We often focus on the secondary causes instead of the primary one. The secondary causes are real but a national crisis cannot be solved by only seeking to remove its secondary causes. Secondary causes are terrorist activity, the unrighteous policies of governments, or an international oil or financial crisis, etc.
- E. When we focus on secondary causes, we come up with secondary solutions. We can march on Washington, picket abortion clinics, call our senators, write appeal letters, etc. These can make an impact in righteous legislation being established in a nation. Yes, secular society must repent of various sins, but these are a secondary solution. When a military crisis occurs, leaders rightly gather for peace-talks. Natural men only think of the secondary causes and solutions. These are important, but they are not enough. We must not minimize the secondary solutions, yet we must know that they cannot take the place of the primary ones.
- F. God often uses pressure to restore His people to a right relationship with Him. Therefore, the primary solution is for the Church to repent and return to God with wholeheartedness, then to stand in the gap in intercession for unbelievers and even for oppressors. This will include prayer with fasting. The primary solution is for the Church to get right with God and then to stand in the gap for others. Our primary solution is to receive God's favor and then pray for unbelievers to receive it.

- G. Joel called God's covenant people to repent of rebellion (Joel 1:15) **before** the military crisis of Joel 2:1-9 began. To receive mercy is to receive the goodness of God that we do not deserve. If we refuse God's mercy then we will receive what we deserve. The Lord, in essence says, "If you do not want My mercy, then I will give you the only alternative, which is justice without mercy."
- H. God's zeal in judgment is the proof of ***His commitment to contend for relationship with people***. His discipline reveals His jealousy to relate to people. When God disciplines His children, it is proof that He loves them (Heb. 12:5-12). It is God's proof that He will not allow things to go unchecked and unmeasured. He will intervene to correct the situation.

Whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)

- I. Each "day of the Lord" in history is designed to prepare the human heart for the ultimate Day of eternal judgment after we die. In other words, they are to prepare people before the Great White Throne judgment when they no longer have opportunity to repent. Between now and eternity, we can change. God desires to transform us by manifestations of His judgment. It is God's mercy to visit a nation with judgment before the great Day of eternity when the judgment is final.

V. PROGRESSION OF JUDGMENT: FROM LOCUST TO MILITARY INVASION (DEUT. 28)

- A. Deuteronomy 28 gives us insight into the judgments seen in the book of Joel. The Body of Christ usually only studies the first fourteen verses of Deut. 28, which speak of God's covenant blessings. We rightly love the blessing of God. We were made for it. However, we cannot dismiss the other fifty-four verses in this chapter that equally express God's heart.
- B. The judgment process which Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 is parallel with what happened in Joel 1-2 and what will happen in the end times. Initially, God promised Israel that He would send a bronzed heaven, or drought with its scorching heat.

Your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron.²⁴ The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. (Deut. 28:23-24)

- C. Later in the prophecy, Moses warned Israel that God would send a locust plague to them.
- You shall carry much seed out to the field and gather but little in, for the locust shall consume it. (Deut. 28:38)***
- D. The progression to a military invasion is the most severe form of judgment for a nation.

Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you ... until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God...⁴⁶ They shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever...⁴⁹ The LORD will bring a nation [Babylon] against you from afar ... as swift as the eagle flies ...⁵⁰ a nation of fierce countenance ...⁵¹ they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed.⁵² They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls ... come down throughout all your land;

and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you.⁵³ You shall eat the fruit of your body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters ... in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. (Deut. 28:42, 46, 49-53)

- E. Moses' prophecy in Deut. 28 was well known in Joel's day. The progression of judgment from locust to a military invasion was too clear for them to miss. It was a prophetic sign to Israel.
- F. A locust plague (Deut. 28:38, 42) was to be followed by a military invasion (Deut. 28:47-57). Babylon was the only nation that destroyed all the fortified walls throughout all Israel. Babylon did this over a 20-year period (606-586 BC). Just over a century earlier, Assyria had besieged and defeated various Israelite cities, but had not defeated Jerusalem. Moses' prophecy in Deut. 28:52 was only partially fulfilled by Babylon.
- G. Moses spoke of a locust plague that would be sent by God to devour the land as it did in Joel's day (Deut. 28:28-42). However, when this judgment came, Israel did not believe it was from the hand of God.
- H. Moses foretold of something far greater than a locust plague. He told of a military invasion by a nation far away (Babylon) that the Lord would bring against Israel (Deut. 28:47-52). They would take ownership of all of Israel's gates and devastate the land. Israel gave way to cannibalism in the midst of the sieges as Moses prophesied (Deut. 28:52-53). Then the Lord scattered them (Deut. 28:64).
- I. Moses foretold exactly what happened in the Babylonian invasion which probably occurred a few decades after Joel's ministry. The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem took place in 586 BC. The same thing happened again in 70 AD when the Romans came against Jerusalem. Once more Moses' words were fulfilled precisely. Yet these words have not yet reached the end of their fulfillment. The dreadful prophecies spoken by Moses will see their ultimate fulfillment in the end times. What happened with Babylon in 586 BC and with Rome in 70 AD foreshadows what will happen in the generation in which the Lord returns. Moses' prophecy in Deut. 28:52 will again be experienced in the end times (Zech. 12-14).
- J. Moses prophesied that if they did not obey God, plagues seven times worse would come.
Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. (Lev. 26:21)
- K. Because of God's patience in judging sin, the wicked assume His judgment will never happen. Solomon affirms this reality revealing that when God's sentence of judgment is delayed, many misunderstand and continue in sin.
Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Ecc. 8:11)

- L. Zephaniah warned Israel not to settle in complacency by refusing to take God's judgments seriously. They said that God would not do good in sending revival or evil in releasing judgments. They consider God to be passive concerning the actions of men.

***It shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.'* (Zeph. 1:12)**

- M. Moses made a startling statement that God's judgments were prophetic signs. They are supernatural works or miracles that contain a prophetic message in it.

They shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder... on your descendants forever. (Deut. 28:46)

- N. The book of Revelation describes the supernatural work of God in releasing disaster. Much of Revelation is a prophecy of supernatural events from God's hand that create disaster. They are intended to be as a sign and wonder, or devastation with a prophetic message in it. The disasters prophesied in Revelation are more than natural calamities taking place; they are the work of God's hand to communicate a prophetic message.

Come, behold the works of the LORD, who has made desolations in the earth. (Ps. 46:8)

***For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."* (Rom. 9:17)**

- O. God caused drought in Amos' day as a prophetic sign. He caused rain to fall on one city and withheld it from another city so it would be evident that a supernatural work was occurring.

"I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. ⁸ So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water ... yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. (Amos 4:7-8)

- P. He sent rain on the cities that sought Him and withheld rain from wicked cities. To one city, the rain was a sign of supernatural blessing. To the other city, it was a sign of supernatural judgment. Some saw in the crisis only a negative weather cycle and, thus, they missed the divine message in the sign.

Session 5: Establishing a Joel 2 Spiritual Culture (Joel 1:2-3)

Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? ³ Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. (Joel 1:2-3)

I. PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE MESSAGE OF JOEL

Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! (Joel 1:2)

- A. The first exhortation of the book of Joel is “hear and give ear” or to pay close attention to the story of Joel 1:1-2:9 knowing that in crisis God desires to bless and not judge.
- B. The long-term message of Joel is that the glory of God in revival is coming along with the crisis of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation. It includes the message that wholeheartedness can make a difference because God is kind and releases blessing in the midst of crisis. We can change history as well as increase the quality of our own life in the natural and in the spirit through wholeheartedness.

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. ¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him? (Joel 2:13-14)
- C. The call to “hear and give ear” is the call to study the book of Joel. It is the call to hear God’s heart as we prepare for future glory and crisis. It takes the work of the Holy Spirit to receive revelation of Joel’s message.
- D. ***The mandate to “hear”*** – Joel challenged them to hear, which means leading a lifestyle that enhances hearing. We must “give ear” in order to give ourselves to going deep in the message.
- E. ***The spirit of revelation*** – Jesus made this same appeal to the seven churches in Revelation, saying, “Let him who has ears, let him hear” (Rev. 2:7, 3:6). Jesus was saying, “Pay close attention, because it takes God’s help to really hear God’s word.” It takes the grace of God to fully hear God’s message with clarity. Be careful with the information you receive because if God does not help us hear it, then we will end up explaining it away or just as soon forget it. If we experience an initial stirring by the end-time message, we must pursue it until our hearts are gripped with revelation. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we want our hearts to burn within us at the opening of the Scriptures (Lk. 24:32). God’s call to hear or to cultivate understanding is essential because the message is offensive to our flesh; we naturally resist what challenges our comfort zone.

- F. ***This hearing does not come automatically because we are Christians.*** It requires an intentional, deliberate cultivating of revelation of the book of Joel. Even the apostles had dull hearts of unbelief when speaking to Jesus after His resurrection (Mk. 16:14)
- G. This process of revelation begins with diligently studying scriptures like the book of Joel. We cannot settle for the initial stirring of our minds. That instruction must become a living understanding in our heart. Another way to say it is that we must “eat the scroll,” digesting its truth until it becomes part of us (Ezek. 3:1; Rev. 10:9). If we do not feed our spirits on the message, the initial inspiration we experience by hearing it will quickly evaporate away. We pray, “Lord, I will not be content until my heart is burning with revelation so that I live differently!”

II. THE COMING CRISIS IS UNPRECEDENTED AND THUS IS UNFAMILIAR TO US

Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? (Joel 1:2)

- A. Joel begins by emphasizing the ***unprecedented magnitude*** of what was to happen in his day. He asks, in essence, “Have you seen anything like this? Is this normal?” The significance of the message is that it is unprecedented; it is unfamiliar and therefore it is not easy to hear.
- B. God’s glory and judgments will shake everything that can be shaken. We are entering a unique time period. Its very unfamiliarity is part of the difficulty of being prepared for it. Most people do not really think about living through the events recorded in the book of Revelation. As of today, the great crisis has not begun.

- C. We must not yield to a scoffing spirit of unbelief about Jesus’ coming.

Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3:3-4)

1. These scoffers that Peter foresaw will be both inside the Church and outside it.
2. Their worldview will not come from the revelation of Scripture, but according to their lusts or their wishful thinking. Not wanting their money, pleasure, or power to be disrupted, they will deem the lifestyle prescribed in the Word to be extreme and unnecessary. Peter said, in essence, “They will be motivated by their own lusts, by their own agendas instead of God’s.”
3. Their unbelief and cynicism will motivate them to say, “Where is the promise of His coming?” In other words, “Where is the coming revival or where is the coming judgment?” These scoffers will perpetuate the lie that everything will continue as it always has. They willfully forget that God rules His kingdom and the universe by His Word (2 Pet. 3:5). In other words, what His Word says will surely come to pass.

- D. Most of the Church in the Western world is not yet convinced of what is coming. We have what I call the ***ostrich syndrome***—putting our heads in the ground and hoping it will all just go away. We hope God will change it all if we remain ignorant. What is written in the Word of God is not going to go away. It will come to pass whether we are prepared for it or not. Has anything like this ever happened? It is new ground for all of us. The greatest revival and the greatest disaster that the world has ever known are coming. Our best days and our worst days are approaching.
- E. Noah is an example of embracing a prophetic message that was unprecedented and unfamiliar to him. In the days of Noah, his message was unprecedented, making it hard for the people to hear him. God told him it would rain for forty days. However, it had never rained in history up to that point. Up until that time, God watered the ground from below and not from rain descending from the sky. When Noah told people that water would come from the sky, they undoubtedly mocked as they informed him, as everyone knew, that the water came upwards from the ground not downwards from the sky. However, when Noah heard this strange message from God he was ***“moved with godly fear”*** (Heb. 11:7).
1. Noah followed through with a radical lifestyle change in giving his time and energy to cutting wood and building an ark—for over one hundred years. Imagine, eighty years into building his boat, his friends must have said, “Noah, are you sure you heard right?”
 2. Noah was so convinced of the word of the Lord that it changed everything about his life. The way he spent time, money, and energy was never the same.

III. LEADERS MUST LEAD

Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! (Joel 1:2)

- A. The mandate to “hear” begins with spiritual leadership. Leaders must “give ear,” in other words, give themselves to this message! They must get on their knees before God with an open Bible and begin to study and meditate on what the Old Testament prophets say will happen in the generation that the Lord returns.
- B. ***The blessing of “leaders who hear”*** – when leaders enter into fasting and prayer and leading by example, “the inhabitants of the land” tune in (Joel 1:2). The blessing of God arises when leaders lead in God’s way.
- C. The greatest gift that God can give a nation is to raise up men and women in leadership with a spirit of revelation and the grace of fasting and prayer. One of the greatest crises in the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, was that the Body of Christ was not mostly being led by leaders with the spirit of grace for fasting and prayer. When this problem is answered, then other issues will be addressed.
- D. Progression – leaders first hear what the Spirit is saying; then the people earnestly give ear to it. People only do on a consistent basis what their leaders do on a consistent basis.

IV. TELLING THE MESSAGE – THE NEED TO PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE

Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children. (Joel 1:3)

A. We must not only hear and be gripped by this message, we must also proclaim it (Joel 1:3). The price we will pay for boldly standing for the truth can be seen in the persecutions that the Old Testament prophets received. They were criticized, ostracized, imprisoned, and killed.

B. God will give us more revelation and authority if we faithfully use what He entrusts to us. The Lord honors the courage and faith that it takes to proclaim the Joel 2 end-time message. Jesus makes reference to Joel 1:2 when He says “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." (Mk. 4:23-25)

V. TELL THE CHILDREN – ESTABLISHING A DYNAMIC SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. (Joel 1:3)

A. After calling the elders to hear and all the inhabitants of the land to give ear, Joel says, “Tell your children about it. Joel gives a four-generation mandate, expressing the necessity of making this part of what the children learn and understand. The elders and the people must tell their children. They in turn will tell their children, and so on.

B. Every child must hear this message clearly in order to understand end-time realities. It should be as “normal” for them to hear about the end of the age as it was for Noah’s three sons to hear that a flood is coming. We must tell the children about the coming Day that is both great and terrible and how we participate with a kind God in it through lifestyles of prayer with fasting. We do not want our children to grow up dumbfounded at what is coming or be indifferent to it.

C. A child’s spirit is like wet cement that is moldable and teachable. Whatever we write on these open spirits—this wet cement— they will receive as true and normal. One reason adults struggle for years with wrong paradigms of God is that they were taught them in their youth. Then thirty years later, we still struggle to get free from wrong paradigms because the cement dried long ago, locking lies into our understanding.

D. We want the pliable hearts of our children to be cement that dries with truth in it. They will consider as true both the great glory and the great crisis coming to the earth. They will believe fasting and prayer is normal for God’s people. After all, every believer they knew while growing up embraced these truths and lifestyle. They will remember what their moms and dads did—they gathered together for fasting and prayer.

- E. There is a spiritual environment or a spiritual culture that God wants us to establish in the midst of the Church. It is best formed when we “tell” our children and they tell their children. When four generations understand this, a new spiritual environment is established that believes in the message. They consider it normal to believe and to act in the ways the Word of God says.
- F. Establishing a dynamic spiritual culture according to the Joel 2 message drives out the scoffing spirit that is filled with complacency (2 Pet. 3:3-4), which will then not take root in our children.
- G. The spiritual culture in the Church is filled with a scoffing and complacent spirit that considers it “extreme” to believe the Word of God for the end times.
- H. We want to raise children in the midst of a spiritual atmosphere of faith and wholeheartedness. In other words, ***prayer and fasting is to be predominate in the spiritual culture of the end-time Church***. This is what God is after in commanding all to “Tell the children...” (Joel 1:3). He wants a spiritual culture established where the children are raised up in faith. Imagine how different it will be when young and old pursue these things together.
- I. I so thank God for Lenny and Tracy LaGuardia who serve on the IHOP–KC senior leadership team. They lead the team that trains the adults in our spiritual family to equip the children to walk out the message of Joel. They have served God’s purpose with the children for over 25 years. Their vision and consistency to raise up children who understand God’s love and who function in the power of God is amazing to me.

Session 6: The Fivefold Action Plan God Wants from Us

Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth ...¹³ ***Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God; for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.***¹⁴ ***Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*** (Joel 1:8, 13-14)

I. LAMENT IN VIEW OF THE MOUNTING CRISIS

Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth...¹³ ***Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar...*** (Joel 1:8, 13)

- A. Joel called the nation to come before the Lord in wholeheartedness. He described the anguish to come in Joel 2.
- B. Joel saw, by the Spirit of God, the severity of the coming devastation. It was a day so painful and so all-consuming that it would make business-as-usual literally impossible. A Day is coming when the nations of the earth will faint for fear (Lk. 21:26). Their strength and hope will be utterly broken.
- C. Joel's urgent call in this passage is that the people of God make it top priority to respond to God concerning the coming crisis.
- D. If we respond to God with our whole heart today, we will not be novices in the deep things of God when calamity strikes. God wants His people to be carriers of His power in crisis.
- E. Joel told them that no class of society would be exempt from the plague and its aftermath. Then Joel shocked his listeners into sobriety. Using a horrifying analogy, he likened the nation to a virgin mourning the death of her husband.
- F. The coming crisis was so terrible that it could be likened to a bride in sackcloth on her wedding day. By using that picture, the nation had a graphic picture of the coming crisis. It is hard to imagine a greater tragedy than a bride losing her husband right after the ceremony. The picture is of a virgin bride whose groom dies before the marriage is consummated. They share their vows in the ceremony. However, on their way to the honeymoon, the one she loves suddenly dies. Thus, she puts off her wedding dress and clothes herself in sackcloth in anguish. She experiences great sorrow. This is the sorrow that Joel sees as appropriate in crying to God.

- G. A bride is someone with future plans and high hopes. A bride in sackcloth is a contradiction of terms because a bride never wears sackcloth, or the garment of mourning, on her wedding day. Yet such will be the agony of those who do not heed Joel's warning. If a bride was told on her wedding day that her new husband was about to die, she would immediately move out of the place of celebration and into the place of mourning. There would be nothing else on her mind, nothing of greater priority than the crisis before her.
- H. After the four waves of locusts had passed, then they faced the aftermath of starvation, death, and disease. It was at this time that the crisis seemed to be in the past tense, yet Joel prophesied that the crisis was not nearly over. The crisis in Israel was mounting up to a new level of intensity. Something much more severe was coming. The first "day of the Lord" that Joel spoke about consisted of threefold crises that included a locust invasion (Joel 1:4-12), an accompanying drought (Joel 1:16-20), and raging fires (Joel 1:19 – 20). In light of these, Joel introduces his urgent burden of a situation far more severe than the agricultural conflict of Joel 1. It was the Babylonian military conflict of Joel 2, but ultimately, the end-time global conflict.
- I. The Lord wanted His people to enter into the kind of mourning that is likened to a bride in sackcloth on her wedding day. In other words, He wanted this to be their top priority in view of what Joel was to prophesy (Joel 1:13-15). He was warning Israel about the next crisis to come, the Babylonian invasion that was approaching possibly within the next decade (Joel 2:1-9). The pagan power of Babylon was mounting up and getting stronger. The horrific analogy of a bride in sackcloth was given to describe the Babylonian invasion. The end-time Day will be even more severe than the Babylonian invasion! It is described in the book of Revelation.
- J. We have a significant amount of information in the Scripture about the generation in which the Lord returns. Enoch, who lived before Abraham and Moses, received revelation of this future Day (Jude 14-15). From the Psalms to the Major and Minor Prophets, to the New Testament, including the book of Revelation, there is more information concerning this final generation than any other time frame in all of natural history.
- K. There are over 150 chapters in the Bible that focus on the end times. Compare this to the four gospels which total 89 chapters. The gospels give us a record of Jesus' ministry related to His first coming when He redeemed us from our sins. The 150 chapters on the end times reveal His ministry related to His second coming when He will rule all the nations. Many of God's people neglect these 150 chapters without considering that they come from the same Bible, reveal the same Jesus, and manifest the same power of the Spirit as the four gospels.

II. WHAT GOD WANTS IS DIFFERENT THAN WHAT MAN SEEKS

- A. God asks things of His people that are so simple, yet many refuse to embrace them.

- B. The story of Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, who had leprosy is an example.

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper. (2 Kgs. 5:1)

1. The Syrian army made many raids on Israel and on one occasion they brought back a young Israelite girl who became the servant of Naaman's wife. This young girl told Naaman about the prophet Elisha, who could heal him of leprosy. Desperate for his healing, Naaman went to Israel. Reaching Elisha's house, he stood outside the door. Yet instead of coming out to greet Naaman himself, Elisha sent a servant with a message.

Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." (2 Kgs. 5:10)

2. This infuriated Naaman who had anticipated a greeting from Elisha and an immediate display of healing power. He couldn't imagine such an unusual way of getting healed as dipping seven times in a river that belonged to Israel, which was Syria's enemy. The plan was so simple that it was offensive. Naaman's pride was aroused when he was called to wash in the Jordan, a Jewish river. Naaman turned away in rage.

His servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" (2 Kgs. 5:13)

3. Naaman dipped in the Jordan River seven times and his leprosy was instantly healed.

- C. God's answer is often so simple that it is offensive, and this is true of God's plan for how a nation is to respond to Him when in crisis. It is the only plan that works. Joel received this plan from Solomon who received it from the audible voice of God nearly 400 years earlier.

The LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer ... ¹³ when I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴ if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chr. 7:12-14)

- D. The fivefold plan given by God through Joel is so plain, yet it remains much neglected today.
- E. This divine plan requires a radical new paradigm of life. This plan is foreign to the mindset of many. However, this is what God requires of us and we cannot improve it.
- F. Joel prophesied that Israel could minimize the devastation by responding in the way God desired. They were still in the early days of the full crisis; starvation had not reached the level that it was going to and disease was not yet widespread.

- G. God was giving the people the opportunity to minimize His judgments related to the locust plague as well as the next crisis that would be caused by the Babylonian military invasion.
- H. Joel 1 is intended by God to show the model of how to respond to the Lord in calamity. Joel was teaching the people of his day how to minimize these disasters God's way, which is actually the only way possible.
- I. By responding correctly, they would develop a history in God and a corporate testimony to draw on in the coming day of military trouble, as described in Joel 2:1-9. They needed to cry out to God together. God was giving them opportunity with these smaller catastrophes to enter into a corporate pursuit of God before the bigger ones came.
- J. God wants us to recognize this pattern of Joel 1-3 for our generation. We will see a progression of His judgments in the book of Joel. The same is true in the book of Revelation.
- K. The earthquake or storm may suddenly happen. But there is a domino effect in society in the aftermath of the earthquake or storm that can seem to go on and on. When He is trying to get the attention of a nation, the progressive intensity of the disruption is not accidental, it is purposeful. Its purpose is to shake a nation out of rebellion and to cause the hearts of His people to arise to Him in prayer to cry for mercy. Though man's sin and Satan's rage are factors in these disruptions, God designs the dilemma to have no human solution other than receiving His favor.
- L. What Joel is saying in essence is, "We can minimize the crisis and its domino effect by crying out to God. We can reduce or completely cancel out some of the destruction through wholeheartedness with fasting and prayer." Some times the aftermath of a calamity is worse than the calamity itself, causing upheavals such as a shortage of food and water, electricity, money, and the food supply. The wave of increased pressure is a new invitation to seek the Lord
- M. When we live through calamity, we should not imagine that the drama is all over because one wave has come and gone and we have survived it. The earthquake, or the plague, is not God's ultimate aim—it is relationship with mankind and deliverance of the oppressed.
- N. The only safety in such crises is in the place of wholeheartedness. Fasting and prayer is not a magic formula, like waving a magic wand at God. It is not the actual act of fasting and prayer that moves the heart of God. It is the wholeheartedness.
- O. Fasting and prayer are expressions of wholeheartedness. Fasting tenderizes our hearts, moving us into a posture of hunger before God; then when our heart is moved, it touches God's heart. Fasting and prayer intensifies abandonment to God and agreement with His heart. These expressions of wholeheartedness are about enriching our heart-connect with God's heart.
- P. Intimacy with His people is what God is after, and because He is a jealous God, He does not want only part of a people. He wants all of them.

III. THE FIVE-PART ACTION PLAN

Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. (Joel 1:14)

- A. This is God's five-step program on how to respond to Him in the midst of crisis. This God-given, fivefold action plan is one that everyone can do without regard to education, prestige, ministry platform, special talents, or economics. It is the required response God has given us in answer to the spirit of hopelessness and despair described in Joel 1:12. This action plan is how we posture ourselves together for the future—before, during, and after the crisis.
- B. Step one: consecrate a fast. We must set apart specific periods of time for corporate fasting. There is nothing ambiguous about this part of the action plan.
 - 1. This in essence is a part of walking in wholeheartedness (Joel 2:12-13). Yet it is often ignored. Fasting increases our capacity to live wholehearted before God. We do not fast to move God, we fast to move our own hearts in the grace of God. We do not earn a thing by fasting. Rather, we position ourselves to receive. It is about an increased capacity in our hearts to experience more of God. Fasting under the grace of God tenderizes our hearts and God is moved by that tenderizing.
 - 2. When we fast, we refuse to pacify our souls with food or other comforts. We refuse to medicate the holy wound of longing for more of God. Thus, spiritual hunger and desperation grows within us. In this way, fasting increases our capacity to receive more from God and enhances our ability to give ourselves back to God in intimacy.
 - 3. The essence of fasting is that we position ourselves before God in voluntary weakness in order to embrace God's strength as our solution. We take our cold hearts and position them before God's fire, asking Him to set us ablaze with love for Him and to consume all that stands in the way. Then we commit to separate our hearts from anything which God reveals as a hindrance.
 - 4. Fasting is not optional if we want to experience the fullness of the grace of God. It is mandatory. We cannot face the coming crisis without the protection of wholeheartedness enhanced by fasting. Fasting is a strange message in the Western church, where self-indulgence is nearly esteemed as a virtue.
 - 5. The grace for fasting is available to everyone. We begin by asking the Lord for this grace. We ask Him to help us desire it. We start off with the basics of fasting-prayer, which is "Lord, make me want to want to fast." The Lord esteems this kind of prayer as valid and if we continue to pursue Him in it, we will desire to fast.

- C. Step two: call a sacred assembly. The Lord wants whole communities to come together to pursue Him in prayer. Private devotion is essential, but it is not enough to answer the coming international crisis. God requires corporate gatherings for prayer.
1. “Assembly” – a gathering in one place together. In Joel’s day they were gathering into the temple, the house of the Lord. The Father has a family and the place in which He releases the fullness of His power is in the context of His family. We can only go so high in our individual consecration; there is a ceiling in the Spirit until we come together.
 2. There are many reasons why we gather together. One practical reason is that the fire in our hearts dies out more easily when we lack the encouragement of others. The Lord knows we need the strength of others. We are strengthened by being with like-hearted people, people of like passion and like vision.
 3. Corporate blessing occurs in the midst of the corporate people of God coming together in wholeheartedness. This is the place of God’s commanded blessing.
Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! For there the LORD commanded the blessing. (Ps. 133:1, 3)
 4. It takes a corporate, unified response over a period of time to receive the highest levels of God’s intended blessing of a geographic area. The greatest measures of blessing and protection are released in the context of corporate, unified wholeheartedness. God the Father gives far more when His children come together as a family. One individual can surely release God’s power but more happens when His people dwell in unity (Ps. 133).
 5. The most anointed intercessors in Israel’s history could not stop the coming judgment.
“Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord GOD. (Ezek. 14:14)

Then the LORD said to me, “Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people.” (Jer. 15:1)
 6. The Holy Spirit is raising up groups of people all over the earth who are committed to wholeheartedness expressed in fasting with prayer and energized by intimacy with God.
 7. The sacred or solemn assembly speaks of its weightiness before God. Sacred in this context means “dedicated” or “set apart” to God. God calls it sacred, and therefore it needs to be important to us. What is of high priority to God must not be casual or optional to us. When the assembly is sacred, there can be no excuses for neglecting it. Often we imagine that we will give ourselves to these kinds of things if our time permits or when we are in the right mood for it. However, this is the wrong position to take on something God calls sacred. God is going to awaken the Church to the revelation of the sacredness of these assemblies. Then they will no longer be treated casually.

8. It takes effort and courage to call and organize sacred assemblies. Lou Engle called thousands to Washington DC in Sept. 2000. Over 400,000 people showed up. He gave invested much effort traveling the nation and mobilizing leaders and rallying people.
 9. God requires solemn assemblies regardless of how much they cost in staff salaries and revenue. Holding a solemn assembly is costly. In the church I pastored for some years, we had over a hundred people on the staff. Whenever we called a solemn assembly for three days, seven days, or twenty-one days, I usually had someone say something to the effect of, “Have you ever done the math on how much work we are *not* doing when a hundred people lay aside their work to pray for three weeks? Do you know how much it costs to pay their salaries while they do no work, how much lost revenue it costs?”
- D. Step three: gather the elders or the governmental leadership in His purposes. God honors the governmental roles that He has commissioned people with. These are also the ones who are able to impact other leaders. Joel is saying, “Go cast the vision to other leaders.”
1. I have found that the most difficult people to gather and rally are those in positions of leadership because of how busy they are.
 2. They have real burdens, responsibilities, and mandates with full schedules. It takes much persuasion, vision-casting and relational building—along with a lot of time, effort, and money—to gather the elders of a city or nation. God is aware of the implications of this plan and the difficulties and the amount of exertion it takes to gather leaders together.
 3. The Lord told Joel to cast the vision and expend the energy necessary to convince them.
- E. Step four: gather all of the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord. This comprehensive description leaves no one out.
- F. Step five: cry out to God by lifting our voices to Him together. As simple as this is, it will not happen with a casual mindset; it is earnest and deliberate. It does not necessarily mean we cry out loudly. It is not about volume, but about engaged hearts. To cry out means that we come into agreement with what God has promised for our geographic area. God wants us to *pray* in the prayer meetings. Though that sounds odd to some, I have been to many prayer meetings where prayer was one of the least things done. There is much preaching, giving testimonies, ministry praise reports and just a lot of talking to one another that happens in some prayer meetings.

IV. THE FOURFOLD PREPARATION FOR GOD'S ACTION PLAN

A. Preparation #1: the call to gird ourselves, to make preparation in practical areas

Gird yourselves and lament, you priests... (Joel 1:13)

1. Joel directs this to the priest, the spiritual leaders. The call to gird ourselves is a call to action to remove things that hinder prayer. He summons them to make things ready in the practical areas of their lives in order to do the necessary work of prayer. Joel was saying, "Change your schedule! Settle issues in your heart that hinder the life of prayer!" To gird one's self in today's language would be "Get out your schedule and rearrange your time. Rearrange the way that you spend time and money." Many overlook this part of the call to a life of prayer.
2. To gird themselves is to make the necessary preparations. It is not enough to be caught in the romance of the calling to prayer without following through to do the work.
3. The decree to "gird ourselves" is to set new priorities. Without preparation, it is easy to only get excited at this novel, dynamic call. We prepare for long-term endurance in prayer even if it means not seeing quick answers. Our initial excitement is not enough to sustain us in pursuing God in a lifestyle of prayer.

4. Jesus used this same language in His earthly ministry.

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning... (Lk. 12:35)

5. We have to rearrange our lives in a sober way, to consider the cost. To do this we must say no to many things. In my case, I refuse many conference speaking invitations. If I travel too much in ministry, my prayer life significantly suffers. I can travel a little. It takes time and energy for the spirit of prayer to be cultivated in my life. I cannot do it effectively if I travel too much.
6. Girding ourselves, or establishing a lifestyle of preparation, is not something that is done automatically. We must intentionally change our schedules to make room for it.

B. Preparation #2: the call to lament, to have a heart-connect with God in the tragic situation

Lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar... (Joel 1:13)

1. Joel calls the people to lament and wail. This speaks of a heart-connect with God and the people who will suffer in the crisis. Joel wants us to feel the pain of the coming crisis before it comes. God wants us to feel the pain of the revelation of judgment from His point of view and to enter into compassion and identification with those under judgment.

2. The angel told John to digest the message. He warned John that it would have an element of sweetness to it, yet it would make his heart sick when he digested its full meaning and implications.
I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. (Rev. 10:10)
3. Joel prophesied that if the people gathered together in a solemn assembly, they could reduce the full ramifications of judgment yet ahead (Joel 1:13-14). The coming military invasion would be far worse than the locust plague.
4. The Spirit will release deep compassion for the human suffering that will come in a time of judgment. We will not be disconnected from the distress of others but will walk in compassion with real lament for the pain of real people.
5. God's people will experience God's grief as well as His compassion for the pain that results from judgment.
6. Also present in this lamenting is the desperate cry to possess all that God has ordained for us. We must have more. We are pained over our weakness, compromise, and powerlessness. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Mt. 5:4). It includes the desperation to enter into the things of God in a greater measure, as well as feeling the sobriety of the hour.
7. We need to feel the pain about our current condition—individual and corporate. This pain and desperation includes our cry to experience more of God.

C. Preparation #3: to lie in sackcloth is to call the leaders to humility

Lament, you priests ... come lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God... (Joel 1:13)

Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:3)

I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people... (Zeph. 3:12)

If My people ... will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face... (2 Chr. 7:14)

1. We humble ourselves in the presence of God for the purpose of prayer. Joel tells the spiritual leadership to lie down in sackcloth. Sackcloth was made of goat's hair. The priest's attire was a beautiful garment, as ordained by God in Exodus 28. They were garments of status, honor, and prestige. The call to dress in sackcloth was not a call to discomfort, but to lay down one's position of privilege or the prestige of their position.

2. Everyone was to be on equal ground before the throne. Joel was essentially saying, “Take off your priestly robes; lay down your ecclesiastical titles, your positions, and degrees.” All are equal before God without any special honor or status, regardless of one’s leadership role. It was a call for everyone to come together before the Lord in humility.

D. Preparation #4: all night – extreme and radical

Lament, you priests ... come lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to God... (Joel 1:13)

1. To come and lie all night before the Lord takes significant effort. Yet this is The Lord’s mandate to leaders. Joel is not merely preaching his personal ministry preferences. It was from God—His mandate to answer the crisis. Joel was not presenting this as an option. He was crying out, “You have to act!”
2. The end-time Church will walk out this radical ministry to God even like Anna did.
Anna, a prophetess ... did not depart from the temple, but ministered to [served] God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Lk. 2:36-37)
3. Some in the Church will do anything except pray and lie all night before God.

V. RUN WITH THIS VISION

- A. Imagine the difficulty of having to answer this five-part mandate and proclaim it to a frantic earth, believers and unbelievers alike, in the hour of crisis. Imagine a *CNN* reporter puts the microphone in your hand and asks, “A terrorist bomb just went off and thousands were killed. What do you think that we should do?” You respond, “First, we must set apart a specific time of prayer and fasting, and we must weep and wail before God. Second, we must get the word out to all the leaders because God has mandated that they gather. The leaders will meet together in one place, have prayer meetings and not eat for a certain period of time. Then they will call the inhabitants of the land to do this also.” This is the plan God has given us to follow, line upon line, in the midst of crisis.
- B. Entire populations of geographic areas are in the balance of the prayer ministries of those regions. We cannot afford to do anything less than fully obey God. We must do it for our own sakes, and we must do it for the sake of our children and grandchildren. God has invited us to be as a city on a hill, giving light to those around us.

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

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: ² a 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. ³ A 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. ⁴ Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. ⁵ With 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. ⁶ Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. ⁷ They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. ⁸ They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. ⁹ They 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. Just before Israel entered the promised land, Moses prophesied about horrifying things to come. He spoke of locust plagues that would be sent by God to devour their land (Deut. 28:28-42). This occurred in Joel's day. When it came upon Israel they would not believe it was sent from God. Even though Moses warned them of this, they refused to believe that God sent the plague. After prophesying the locust invasion, Moses also foretold of something far greater in severity. He told them about a coming military invasion by a nation from afar (the Babylonians) that the Lord would bring against Israel (Deut. 28:47-52). They would take ownership of all of Israel's gates and devastate the land. Israel would give way to cannibalism during the sieges (Deut. 28:52-53). Then the Lord would scatter them across the nations, from one end of the earth to the other (Deut. 28:64).
- B. The Babylonian invasion occurred (606-586 BC) in three stages just a few decades after Joel's ministry. After the siege, the Lord promised that He would scatter Israel across the nations, from one end of the earth to the other (Deut. 28:64). This was fulfilled in part on several occasions as Gentile nations invaded Israel then deported their people as prisoners to foreign lands. The three primary examples of this in Israel's history were seen in the Assyrian invasion (722 BC), the Babylonian invasion (606-586 BC), and the invasion by the army of the Roman Empire (70 AD).
The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other ... there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known... (Deut. 28:64)
- C. Moses' prophecy of Israel being scattered and in captivity will see its ultimate fulfillment in the end times (Ps. 102:20; Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; 42:7, 22; 49:9, 21, 24-26; 61:1; Jer. 30:3, 8, 10, 17; 31:16, 23; Ezek. 39:23-29; Joel 3:1-2; Hos. 11:11; Amos 9:14; Mic. 4:6; 5:6; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 13:8; 14:2; Mt. 25:43; Lk. 21:24).

- D. Specifically in our study of Joel, God would have us understand the divine picture of the Babylonian invasion. In understanding some basic principles about this event, with the spirit of prayer as our aid, the Holy Spirit will give us understanding for the hour ahead.

II. PROPHETIC VOICES DECLARING MILITARY INVASION

- A. Jesus prophesied that military invasions would be a part of God's purpose in judging nations.
- B. Jesus prophesied a future military invasion of Israel by the Romans in 70 AD, with a double fulfillment at the end of the age.

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near... (Lk. 21:20).

1. This prophecy serves a double purpose because He was describing two events in one passage. Jesus was describing the Roman invasion of Israel that would happen in 70 AD. Thus, He was describing a near invasion that would happen within one generation.
 2. At the same time, He was describing a far-off invasion occurring in the end times (Lk. 21:20-24). Matthew gives details of an end-time military invasion in Israel (Mt. 24:15-22).
- C. 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 that 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 the results of them.
Another horse, fiery red, went out. It was granted ... take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Rev. 6:4)
Behold, a pale horse. The name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)
 - D. Paul warns us of end-time military conflicts: "For when they say, "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction..." (1 Thes. 5:3). In other words, when everyone thinks that it is an hour of peace, the peace will suddenly be disrupted by war. Military invasions will take peace from the earth.
 - E. The Old Testament prophets, 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 20-year period, leaving the nation utterly decimated. The three waves of invasion were 606 BC, 597 BC, and 586 BC. The timing factor of the three waves of conflict occurring over a 20-year period helps us to have a right mindset about the future. It may well take twenty years for the military conflicts to come to pass. Joel may possibly have prophesied this ten or more years before the first wave occurred. We know this because it had to be within the lifetime of those who were called to pray and fast in order to ask God to stop them.
- B. One principle of biblical prophecy is that God often intends two fulfillments in one prophecy—a near fulfillment and an end-time fulfillment. We see this in Matthew 24, in which Jesus links the desolation of 70 AD to the global desolations which precede His coming.
- 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 Zech. 12-14. The intensity and magnitude of this conflict will surpass the devastation caused by Babylon in 586 BC and by Rome in 70 AD. It will be the most severe shaking in Israel's history.

IV. BLOW THE TRUMPET! LET ALL THE INHABITANTS TREMBLE

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: A 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. Joel is commanding them to blow the trumpet on Mt. Zion. It is a call to wake up the people of God to repent and then to cry out to God to intervene with mercy (Joel 2:12-14).
- B. Zion is the city of Jerusalem. Yet 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 application today in God's servants raising their voice, so that all the inhabitants in the land hear and tremble.

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

- 1. The trumpet sound is the alarming noise that declares the severity of the time at hand. In His mercy, God has His messengers sound this alarm so His people can respond.
- 2. We need preaching that produces trembling. It has never been popular, as all the prophets know. The call to blow the trumpet is a prophetic call that requires boldness and courage.

3. If He gives the message to the watchman and the watchman does not blow the trumpet, the blood of the people is on the hands of the watchman.
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. They announce Jesus' second coming even as John the Baptist announced His first coming.
- D. The desired result of this trumpet sound is that the people—all the inhabitants of the earth, believers and unbelievers—would *tremble*. There is a message that is so alarming in nature, that when it is understood, the inevitable result is trembling in the hearts of both the hearers and the proclaimers.
- E. What this “trembling” means is that people are driven to decision: they either harden their hearts, or they humble themselves with fasting and prayer (Joel 2:12-17). The trumpet blast was an act of mercy to all who would tremble at God's word.

V. A DAY OF DARKNESS

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 darkness is related to a military invasion at the hands of an evil empire.
- C. I hear people say, “I don't like that doom and gloom.” They only want to hear the positive dimensions, and they feel that the doom and gloom message contradicts God's love. “Doom and gloom” is God's own language for that day. When we mockingly say, “I do not like doom and gloom,” we are telling the Lord that we do not like the description He chose for *His* day.

VI. THE COMING ARMY: LIKE MORNING CLOUDS

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

- A. Joel compares the looming army to morning clouds over the mountains. Joel likens the day of gloom to the dawning of a sunrise. There are several characteristics of a dawning sunrise. First, its onset is inevitable; no man can alter its rising. Just as the sun coming up over the mountains, an army of gloom will break upon the nations. It will come like a sunrise; no eye will miss it and no man will evade 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 part of this sunrise analogy is that the morning's intensity increases gradually. As the hours go by, it grows until it fills the horizon, ultimately shining brightly and intensely as the noon-day sun. Just as God brings forth the morning progressively rather than all at once, so the day of gloom will grow stronger and stronger. This progressive nature was seen in Joel's day by the three waves of the Babylonian invasion. It broke out suddenly, but then it gradually increased in intensity for several years. But the point we cannot miss is that it 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 imminent army is irrepressible and vast.

VII. A PEOPLE GREAT AND STRONG

Like 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 this approaching army. They will be unsurpassed in size, might, and in fierceness. David prophesied that all the nations would gather together against God and against His Christ (Ps. 2:1-3). That will be the largest military upsurge in all of human history.
- B. The army will be great—greatness is due to vast numbers or numerical strength.
- 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).

That no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Rev. 13:17)
 2. Their strength will also be in occult power. Some historians say people followed Hitler because of his demonic ability to deceive the masses.

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

- D. The leadership of the Antichrist's empire will be far stronger in persuasion and deception than Hitler was. 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).
- 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, in its size, and in its strength. Its demonic powers will be beyond anything yet manifest. Even as the Lord Himself allowed Babylon, an evil army, to advance in knowledge and strength, so He will allow an end-time northern army to come forth.
- G. This end-of-the-age invasion will not be seen again for many successive generations, not until the millennial rebellion (Rev. 20:7-9).

VIII. A FIRE DEVOURS BEFORE THEM

A 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 desolations by raging fires will precede and follow this great army. This happened in the Babylonian invasion and in the Roman invasion, and it will happen again at the end of the age. Before they show up, fire precedes them. The land that was like the "Garden of Eden," plush and fruitful, will become as a desolate wilderness. They will make the cities desolate and this will be the state of the earth when the Lord returns.
- B. When Joel prophesies that fires surround the fierce army, it speaks of tremendous bombardment before and after the invasion. When the Nazis retreated from the eastern front in the Ukraine and Russia, they had a "scorched earth" policy. They burned everything for many, many miles so their enemy could not use the resources from that land.
- C. The Lord will rebuild the desolate cities and the desolate places when He returns (Isa. 49; 61). These desolate places will be the result of the end-time global conflict. The carnage after WWII is a graphic picture of what will happen before the Lord's return. The desolate cities of Europe and Asia after the war was over give us a frame of reference for this. Nothing escaped, not the buildings, the animals, the plants, the architecture, or the agriculture.

IX. THEIR APPEARANCE LIKE HORSES

Their appearance is like ... horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With 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. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. (Joel 2:4-6)

- A. Their speed and appearance is like horses that run like swift steeds; Joel expressed their advance using the language of his own day. He was painting a most petrifying scene. Joel is speaking about a literal military invasion of an army unmatched in swiftness and speed.
1. In WWII, the Nazis' swiftness was called the "blitzkrieg," which means "lightning wars." It was a military advance that conquered nations very quickly. 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. The sounds of this army are 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. The devastation on the residents of Jerusalem – the faces of those who behold this coming military force show forth their fear. Their faces are drained of color, becoming ghostly white in fear at the very sight of this warring onslaught. 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 sends them into utter dread. In this passage, Joel is primarily describing Jewish victims in the city of Jerusalem. Their faces will be drained of color as their bodies are gripped with terror. Jesus said "People will faint for fear when this happens."

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. (Luke 21:26)

X. MEN OF WAR

They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. They 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)

The day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity... (Zech. 14:1, 2)

- 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, not chaotic or in any way disordered. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. They are restrained and not out of control with emotion in battle.
- 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 as they leave no stone unturned in their assault. No resistance except divine intervention will stop them. The Babylonian army climbed the walls of Jerusalem and the Antichrist's army will do the same. This army will be overpowering. Zech. 14:1-3 describes this terrifying assault upon Jerusalem in the end times. This army will be irresistible; it will be the force God raises up to awaken Israel and the nations to Jesus' salvation.
- 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

The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. 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 2:10-11)

- 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 introduce the subject of these dramatic, cosmic signs in the same passage that He speaks of 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, which are the most severe judgments in the book of Revelation. God is saying, "I have power over all the armies on earth and over the sun and stars. I have all power on earth and in heaven."

- D. The Lord gives voice or direction as the One leading His armies. His army was the nation Babylon 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.
- 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. He is the God who is executing His Word and fulfilling His eternal plan as foretold by the prophets.
- 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).
- There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 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. ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. (Lk. 21:25-28)*
1. Through these cosmic signs, God demonstrates His total control and full awareness of everything going on. Every detail has been orchestrated. He has authority over the stars in the heavens.
 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.
- 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 ...²⁵ "To whom then will you liken Me?" says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power... (Isa. 40:15, 17, 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, which takes less power to administrate. How much easier is it to move an army around, or to defeat an army, than it is to move the stars around and turn the light of the sun and moon on and off?
- G. No one but God can move the stars, the moon, and the sun. God's statement through the shifting of these solar powers is that He is in control.

XII. GOD IS WORKING OUT HIS GREAT PLAN ON EARTH

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 because 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.
 - 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 it.
- B. "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible" (Joel 2:11). The end-time drama will be intense and dreadful. The great and terrible Day of the Lord is *His* Day. He is orchestrating this Day and fulfilling His Word. 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 proclaimed that the only solution in that Day is to find the favor of God. There will be no escape without His favor.
- D. This Day will be almost impossible to endure for those who do not experience the mercy of God. This question is asked in the context of the military crisis brought on the nations by the Antichrist's reign of terror, by God's cosmic judgments, and then by Jesus' second coming. First, we need God's favor in forgiving us; then we will need God's favor in provision, prophetic direction, and protection to survive the crisis without dying.

Session 8: The Necessity of “Day-of-the-Lord Preachers”

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. (Joel 2:1)

I. PREACHING THAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO TREMBLE

- A. The Day-of-the-Lord preaching is to create an alarm in God’s people and then to cause their hearts to tremble.
 - 1. To alarm – 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.

II. 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, 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 then 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 the *great* and the *terrible* in 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 the “God of wrath” was only in the Old Testament and the New Testament only shows a “God of Mercy.” 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 that the Day of the Lord is at hand means that it is not for a future generation but it is for the generation alive at that time.

III. PREACHING THAT PRODUCES TREMBLING

Blow 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- 2)

- 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).

IV. 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. ***The nations were angry and Your wrath has come. (Rev. 11:18)***
- C. The nations will be drunk in their anger against Jesus’ end-time anger as seen in His judgments. ***I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk... (Isa. 63:6)***

I. THE “OFFENSIVENESS” OF JESUS

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

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

- A. Many will be offended by Jesus’ leadership as seen in His judgments. He separates those who truly want Him from those who do not. He causes 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 heart 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 by seeing 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 to think that He was talking about the temple that took forty-six years to build! He purposely offended their understanding, to cause what was in their heart 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. 6:67).

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 or a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

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 of 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).
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 know-ability 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 at the same time 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 believed they were the last one. The fact is that the believers in the first century were the only generation in history in which the majority of God's people believed in a sustained way that they would see the return of Jesus in their lifetime. It is true that a very small number of believers in other generations believed this in a sustained way. I am guessing that it was not more than 1% in any other generation. Some 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. 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 them to understand the Scripture, 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 toward the escapist and defeatist mentality of some who believe in the pretribulation rapture. They conclude that they should 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 that 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 with power during the most dramatic time in history. This 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 gain courage when we see end-time prophecy fulfilled before our eyes. We must understand it before we can discern its fulfillment. This encourages us that God is in control and that He cares for us. This gives us courage to proclaim 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 live in peace instead of making decisions in the coming crisis with fear with panic. We cannot see clearly with the smoke of fear and panic in our eyes.

- C. **Continuity** – Understanding the dynamic continuity of our present character and works to the age to come is vital. We see this continuity in the teaching of the Great Tribulation and the millennial kingdom.
- D. **Fascination** – With revelation of the beauty of Jesus (Isa. 4:2; 28:5; 33:17) in seeing His leadership (love, wisdom, and power) in His dramatic plans for the end times. In this, Jesus combines 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 an issue of life and death. This helps us have right expectations for the future that 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 thus have discernment of what seductions to avoid or what not to do. For example, we must refuse the positive persuasions to take the mark of the Beast, or 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 in 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 protection. Understanding causes us to have urgency to live a life of prayer and to cultivate spiritual depth (going deep in understanding of 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, then we have confidence and zeal to go deeper in our study of other end-time passages. One of the biggest hindrances today is the conclusion that end-time prophecy is too difficult to understand, so why even try.

Session 9: How to Respond to Global Crisis (Joel 2:12-17)

I. GOD’S GOVERNMENT THROUGH CORPORATE INTERCESSORY WORSHIP

- A. God has given the human race great dignity. We have a free will, which means we have been given the ability to make real choices that make a real difference. These choices for righteousness or for sin will bring either blessing or evil to us and those around us. If we choose righteousness, then we have the power to open doors of blessings on others. Not only that, but man’s free will provides the legal entry point for both angels and demons to be much more active in the natural realm. When we live in righteousness, we open up legal access for angelic activity into the natural realm. When people live in rebellion, they open up legal entry points for demonic activity to be heightened. We affect the quality of life by what we do with our free will. Some of our choices now will affect us forever.
- B. God governs the universe in intimate partnership with His people through intercession. The majesty and mystery of intercession is seen first and foremost in Jesus’ relationship with the Father. The Father’s power and blessing is released to the nations and on His people as Jesus makes intercession for them throughout eternity.
He [Jesus] always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:25)
[The Father said to Jesus]... Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)
- C. The prayer room is the governmental center of the universe. God has chosen to release His power through our prayers. Prayer transcends time and distance. Paul could change the church in Ephesus through his prayers while he was in prison in Rome. In the same way, we can change the cities of the earth through our prayers in our local prayer meetings.
- D. God has already determined the primary events in His eternal plan (second coming of Jesus, Jesus reigning over the whole earth as King, Satan being cast into the lake of fire, the establishing of the new heavens and earth, etc.). Regardless of what people or demons do, God will accomplish the main events of the plan He has determined for the future.
- E. However, He has chosen to give His people a dynamic role in determining some of the measure of the “quality of life” that we experience in the natural and in the Spirit (in time and eternity). We make significant contributions in the quality of life. We determine this based on our response to the grace of God in our partnership with Him (particularly in prayer and meekness).

- F. He opens doors of blessing and closes doors of oppression in response to our prayers. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but only if His people rise up in the intimate partnership of prayer to ask for them. Jesus will continue to run the world this way even after the second coming.

You do not have because you do not ask. (Jas. 4:2)

This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. (Mt. 17:21)

- G. God is waiting for our persistence in prayer before Him. Isaiah taught that He longs to release His grace and power, but actually waits until He hears the cry of His people in intercession.

The LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on High to have compassion on you ... ¹⁹ He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Isa. 30:18-19; NAS)

- H. Ezekiel taught that God searched for one who would stand in the gap between Himself and Israel, someone who would pray in a way that would cause God's judgment to be withheld. God could not find such a person and destroyed the land. The power of intercession is awesome as it determines the course of the nations of the earth.

So 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)

- I. When God was angry with Israel because of her sin, Moses stood in the gap between Israel and God in prayer. God actually relented, or changed His plan, and did not destroy the nation. Moses' intercession resulted in God showing His mercy instead of judgment. This is amazing.

The LORD said to Moses, "... indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them ..." ¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "... turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people ..." ¹⁴ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:9-14)

II. CORPORATE INTERCESSORY WORSHIP

- A. Corporate intercessory worship is the primary means God has chosen to release His government (power) in His relationship with Jesus and His redeemed. It is the highest expression of government in time and eternity, and the most powerful weapon that exists. It is far stronger than the combined strength of all the nuclear weapons on earth. Many who love their communion with God in prayer do not yet have a revelation of the authority they have in intercession. Many worship leaders love Jesus and music, yet they do not have a revelation of the authority of corporate intercessory worship.
- B. God's primary call to a nation in crisis is to gather in solemn assemblies (Joel 2:12-17). In other words, corporate intercessory worship is what we need most in this hour of history.

1. **Corporate** – God is looking for prayer that is corporate. It requires humility to embrace all that is implied in gathering corporately. The differences between worship and prayer styles, doctrinal emphases, as well as our personalities, make humility necessary if we are to gather together in a regular way. When Jesus warned of praying in public (Mt. 6:5-7), He was rebuking a wrong spirit in us that desires to make a show of our superior dedication. He was not commanding His people to refuse to gather together for public prayer.
 2. **Intercessory** – God is looking for prayer that is intercessory. Intercessory prayer stands in the gap for others as we declare back to God what God promised to do for His people. It is not enough for us to only pray to express our personal devotion to Him. We must lift our voice in intercession for others.
 3. **Worship** – God is looking for prayer that is based in worship. Prophetic music and song unifies God's people in a unique way. Through worship, thousands can remain in unity for sustained periods of time as they feel the same truths.
- C. Some “trust” the sovereignty of God in a non-biblical way by “trusting” God to do the role that He has assigned to us. This is not truly trusting God, but is presumption before Him. **We cannot do God's part and He will not do our part.** Some misapply the truth that if God wants something then He will do it. This is true in some of the broad strokes of how He leads history. However, there are many things that God will not give us until we walk it out practically with faith and obedience. Significantly, God wants all to be saved, but it does not happen because God will not violate our free will in our salvation (2 Pet. 3:8-9)
- D. These three components together form corporate intercessory worship, which releases God's judgment and blessing, and halts the destruction of the enemy.
- Let the *high praises* of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, ⁷ To execute *vengeance* on the nations, and *punishments* on the peoples; ⁸ to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹ to execute on them the written judgment—*This honor have all His saints.* Praise the LORD! (Ps. 149:6-9)**
- E. Corporate intercessory worship stops destruction. When the nations of Moab and Ammon came to battle against Jerusalem under King Jehoshaphat's leadership, he gathered Israel in corporate intercessory worship and God destroyed the enemy.
- Jehoshaphat ... set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ¹⁸ All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ Then the Levites ... stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high. ²¹ ... he [Jehoshaphat] appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: “Praise the LORD, For His mercy endures forever.” ²² Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. (2 Chr. 20:3-4, 18-22)***

III. THE RESPONSE THAT GOD REQUIRES: SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments; 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.¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him ...?¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly;¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes ...¹⁷ Let the priests ... weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, “spare Your people, O LORD...” (Joel 2:12-17)

- A. God’s primary call to a people in crisis is to gather together for solemn assemblies, that is, for prayer, worship, fasting, and to repent of our sins, asking God to release His great power and mercy on our behalf. In Joel 2:12-17, God tells us exactly what we are to do to receive His mercy and deliverance—we are to turn to Him in wholeheartedness.
- B. A solemn assembly or a sacred assembly involves leaders and people joining together to repent, fast, and pray for the intervention of God’s power and mercy. In the next chapter we will study this assembly in detail.
- C. Crying out to Jesus in a solemn assembly is a practical thing to do before and during a crisis. Jesus will release His favor and protection in response to our wholeheartedness and intercession.
- D. His answer for today’s crisis is the same as what He spoke in Joel’s generation when a Babylonian invasion was imminent. This is the clearest passage in the Word that describes what God desires of us in times of local or national crisis. As the global drama unfolds at the end of the age, the Body of Christ has a plain road map. God is asking His people for a specific response. He does not leave us guessing as to what He desires from us. What a holy confidence this brings! We can act with certainty in times of crisis. God will shake all that can be shaken. This will back the whole world into a corner of desperation where they cannot find any solution except in Him. He will remove all our false hopes so that we hope only in Him.
- E. Earlier Joel enjoined the people to “Come, lie all night in sackcloth” as they did two things—fast and call a solemn assembly. They were to gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord to cry out in prayer (Joel 1:13-14). This was to be their response to the devastating effects of a locust plague and drought. In Joel 2, he calls them to the same response of fasting and prayer in light of a coming military invasion by the Babylonians. This passage doubles as a call to Israel during the future time of the Antichrist’s reign of terror.

IV. TURN TO GOD WITH WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

Now therefore, says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning.’¹³ Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD...’ (Joel 2:12-13)

- A. God wants our hearts and our love (Mt. 22:37). This reveals His heart. He requires that we respond to His love for us by loving Him in return. He delivers us as we give our hearts to Him as an offering of love. What does it look like to turn to Him with all our heart? Turning to God in wholeheartedness involves repenting, fasting, and praying.
- B. The very existence of mankind is because God loves us and desires a deep relationship with us.
- C. The place of safety in the time of judgment is in the midst of a company of people living in long-term, corporate wholeheartedness. As we respond to Jesus' work on the cross with a response of wholeheartedness, we walk in God's favor in a time of judgment.
- D. ***I want to be in the midst of a people who are developing a corporate, long-term history in wholeheartedness.*** I believe that corporate wholeheartedness is the safest place on the earth.
- E. Joel defined what turning to God looks like. Turning to God with all our hearts involves fasting, weeping, and mourning before the Lord.
- F. Joel 2:12-17 and Joel 1:13-14 exhort God's people to take action and change their lifestyles.

V. REND YOUR HEART AND NOT YOUR GARMENTS

So rend your heart and not your garments; return to the Lord your God... (Joel 2:13)

- A. Traditionally, in the generation that Joel prophesied, the people would tear their garment to show their grief and desperation. However, what God desires is the tearing of the heart, which speaks of dealing radically with the matters of the heart.
- B. To rend means to tear something violently or forcibly. When we violently tear our heart away from areas of sin, we line up with what God requires. Joel cried out, "Tear your heart open! Spare not!" We must remove every area in our life that quenches the Holy Spirit! Speaking symbolically of this radical tearing, Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" (Mt. 5:29). This refers to a radical pursuit of obedience that tears the heart in the process.
If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out ... for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Mt. 5:29)
- C. ***Tearing the heart is the part that is most overlooked in the process.*** It is intensely personal and painful. The Lord will help us in this. Yet we must cooperate with Him, by tearing open the inner places of our heart to Him. Some want the Lord to cause their problems to evaporate without any cost, struggle, or pain in tearing their hearts.
- D. We cannot pursue wholeheartedness in a casual way. Some hope for a wholeheartedness that is gentle, easy, and tame. Our hearts must be torn from areas in which we live in persistent compromise.

- E. Jesus tore His heart when He went to the cross. God the Father's heart was torn when He gave Jesus' life away and it continues to be torn in His patient longsuffering with His people as they refuse Him. He tears His own heart in His pursuit after us. He has proved that He does not love us in a detached, distant way. To fully enter into this love, our own hearts must be torn.

VI. REPENTING WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S TENDER HEART: A 5 FOLD REVELATION

Return to the Lord ... for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent...? (Joel 2:13-14)

- A. Joel summons the people to return to the Lord, giving five reasons why this is doable and wise. God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and He relents from doing harm. He desires to make a way of deliverance. The knowledge of God's heart for us gives us courage to tear our hearts in repentance. If we take one step toward Him, He will take ten steps toward us.

- B. First, the Lord is gracious in that He evaluates us differently than anyone else does. He remembers our frailty and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He is not a harsh leader. He is not like the angry coach or parent who rejects weakness. God's style of relating is human-friendly. The grace of God puts His requirements within the reach of the weak (1 Jn. 5:4; Mt. 11:30). Some do not turn to the Lord because they do not understand that He is gracious and kind and that He will make a way of deliverance for us. He will help us like the shepherd helped the lost sheep, carrying us to the place of breakthrough and victory (Lk. 15).

He has not dealt with ... nor punished us according to our iniquities. (Ps. 103:10)

For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:14)

- C. Second, the Lord delights in mercy. He enjoys what is awakened in us when we understand that He gives us a new start after each failure. We soon realize that there is no one like Him!

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity ... because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)

- D. Third, the Lord is slow to anger and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). God is not easily provoked with our weakness. He longs to forgive all who ask for it.

Say to them: "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. 33:11)

- E. Jesus spoke of His great patience to the church in Thyatira. He gave them time to repent of their immorality, and He does the same for us.

Because you allow ... Jezebel ... to teach ... My servants to commit sexual immorality ... ²¹ I gave her time to repent of her immorality ... ²² indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent... (Rev. 2:20-22)

- F. Fourth, the Lord has great kindness. When we believe in God's kindness, we have confidence to press into full repentance. We can ask Him to help us repent. Our repentance will never be met with rejection. This gives us the courage to tear our hearts, knowing that God desires to restore our fellowship with Him.

Do you despise the riches of His goodness [kindness], forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness [kindness] of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)

Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:35)

- G. The Lord is so kind that He will forgive and forget our sin if we will repent of it.
- H. Fifth, the Lord relents from doing harm. God desires to relent from the judgment that the nations deserve. When a people repent, He sends blessing to that region.

Return to the Lord ... for He is gracious ... He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:13)

VII. THE LORD RELENTS FROM SENDING JUDGMENT

Return to the Lord ... for He is gracious ... He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:13)

I sought for a man ... 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)

- A. God desires to relent, or to cancel the decree of judgment, instead of issuing it.
- B. There are two stages in God's decrees: First, the decree is established in the heavenly court. Second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute the judgment, or else the decree is canceled.
- Gather yourselves together ... ² before the decree is issued ... before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you ... ³ Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth ... it may be that you will be hidden [protected from judgment] in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:1-3)***
- C. In response to our prayer, God changes what He releases in our lives. The end result of a coming disaster can be changed (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32: 9-14; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; 24:10-14; 2 Chr. 34:22-28; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:6-8; Ezek. 18:21, 22, 28; 33:10-14; Dan. 4:29; Amos 5:1-3, 14-15; 7:1-6; Zeph. 2:1-3; Hab. 3:16-19; Jon. 3:4-10; Mal. 3:16-4:6).
- D. One of the great examples of God's willingness to relent is found in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon learning of God's intentions to judge the city, Abraham asked the Lord if He would relent and save it if there were only fifty righteous people in it. The Lord told Abraham that He would, so Abraham pressed the question to forty-five people, then forty, then thirty, then twenty. Finally, Abraham said, "If there were only ten righteous in the city, would You spare them?" Again the Lord told Abraham that if He found as few as ten people who would agree with His heart, that would be enough to relent and save the city (Gen. 18:22-33).

- E. There are three steps in our partnership with God. First, **God initiates** what He wants by declaring it in His Word and stirring our hearts. Second, **we respond** in obedience and prayer to God's initiative. Third, **God answers** our responses by releasing more blessing that He would otherwise have withheld if He had not heard our cry. Our prayers matter, even when we do not feel their power.
- F. Because of Jesus' work on the cross, we receive the gift of righteousness. We respond to this with a commitment to walk in righteousness. Therefore, we can receive God's favor (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

VIII. WHO KNOWS?: THE "PERHAPS OF GOD"

So rend your heart ... for He is gracious ... and He relents from doing harm. ¹⁴ *Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him...? (Joel 2:13-14)*

Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth ... seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be [perhaps] that you will be hidden [protected] in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:3)

- A. There is what I refer to as "the perhaps of God" in God's plans. Perhaps God may respond to our prayers in such a way that He will not send the judgment that has been decreed.
- B. God desires to turn from judgment and leave a blessing. He prefers to transform a would-be **disaster zone into a revival center**. The Lord relents from judgment in geographic areas according to the response of His people. He invites us to trust His heart, press into Him in prayer, and rest in the assurance that He is far more merciful than we could imagine.
- C. In Joel's day, in light of the Babylonian invasion that Israel faced, God invited them to cry out to Him that perhaps He would provide pockets of mercy in the midst of the invasion.
- D. Joel spoke of the blessing that the Lord might leave behind in the grain and drink offerings. He was saying in essence that if the Babylonian invasion happened the crops would be utterly destroyed. Then, there would be no grain or wine for the offerings to the Lord.
- E. David knew about this "perhaps" of God after he sinned with Bathsheba. She bore a son. Nathan prophesied to David that the baby would die because of his sin. David knew the baby might die, but he also knew that God has such mercy that "perhaps" He would spare the child.

David pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground ... ¹⁸ *On the seventh day ... the child died. David ... anointed himself ... and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. His servants said, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'"* (2 Sam. 12:16-22)

IX. GATHER THE PEOPLE AND SANCTIFY THE CONGREGATION

Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes... (Joel 2:15-16)

- A. How should we respond to the danger that we see arising in the earth? The Lord has given us a clear and effective plan through the prophet Joel. It will take faith to carry it out.
- B. We are to blow the trumpet in Zion to call a solemn assembly. We assemble the elders who will then gather the people to pray and fast. Fasting positions our hearts to experience the grace of God in a greater way.
- C. ***Blow the trumpet in Zion*** – boldly proclaim the coming judgment and the solemn assembly.
- D. ***Consecrate a fast*** – fasting positions our hearts to experience the grace of God in a greater way.
- E. ***Call a sacred or solemn assembly*** – gatherings that are sacred in their priority to our schedules. It is no time for business as usual in the way that the leaders conduct their ministries.
- F. ***Gather the people and children and assemble the elders*** – the children are to be part of this gathering. God's exhortation is that no one be exempt from crying out to Him, since none of these will be exempt from the coming crisis and judgment.
- G. ***Sanctify the congregation*** – when we sanctify people under our leadership, we lay aside ministry programs to make seeking God the top priority in terms of time, money, and work force.
- H. Joel used three different words to emphasize the sacredness of prioritizing them. He urged them to consecrate times of fasting, to see the gathering or assemblies as sacred, and to sanctify the congregation. To sanctify a congregation means to present it as a top priority to the people in that congregation. Joel called the people to see the meetings as sacred (Joel 2:12-15). This refers to both having a sacred attitude in the prayer meetings and to it being sacred in prioritizing of our time to attend. In other words, they were to approach them with a serious attitude—an attitude of it being important to their schedule.
- I. One dictionary defines *sacred* as referring to something dedicated to God for religious purposes, or to reverently dedicate it exclusively to a single use because it is worthy of great respect, or is something a person holds to be important and, thus, has a transformative effect on their lives and destinies. To be sacred is in contrast to being secular (such as sacred music). It is to reverently dedicate.

- J. Seeing an activity as sacred can be applied in two ways—first, seeing it as holy in the sense of being directly connected to God in a unique way such as the sacred Scriptures; and second, to see it as very important to us instead of being optional or casual. We follow through on our commitments to God when we see them as important to God. Thus, they are sacred or important to us.

X. GIVE YOURSELF TO EARNEST PRAYER

Let the priests who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar. Let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (Joel 2:17)

- A. Joel continues to describe the wholehearted response that God desires by emphasizing the necessity of earnest prayer. We cry out for His visitation of mercy with earnestness of heart.
- B. Joel calls the priests (the leadership) to actively lead the people in earnest prayer and then gives them two specific prayers to bring to God.
1. First, “Spare Your people, O God!” This is a prayer that God would release protection, provision, and direction that His people might be helped in light of the crisis.
 2. Second, “Do not give Your heritage to reproach that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is your God?’” Joel urged them to pray to stop the Babylonian military invasion so that the nations would not rule over Israel. The prayer was that God would spare Israel from Babylon. One reason Joel gave to pray was so that other Gentile nations would not mock Israel because God was no longer in their midst to bless and protect them.
 3. Some commentaries see the military invasion of Joel 2:1-9 as merely a reiteration of the locust invasion of Joel 1. However, in this prayer, Joel points to a crisis involving a military invasion rather than a natural disaster brought on by locusts. This prayer was not asking God to stop locusts from devouring their crops. This prayer helps us to know the context of Joel 2:1-9.
- C. We may use a secondary application of this prayer by asking the Lord to spare the Church from spiritual barrenness and powerlessness so that unbelievers would not mock God’s people, as if God was not real to us. We beseech God to vindicate His people for the sake of His name! He delights in bringing glory to Jesus’ name by answering the prayers of the saints, showing Himself to be active in their midst.

- D. Unbelievers reason that if there is no power in the Church, then God is not listening to our prayers. Therefore, if God does not listen to us then why should they? We cry out that God would take away reproach for us by empowering us. The nations will be provoked in seeing an anointed victorious Church.

XI. THE RESPONSE GOD REQUIRES

- A. The central idea of Joel 2:12-17 is that God wants to deliver His people. He desires to show compassion and to release His power. Therefore, He has given us clear instruction. Joel 2 offers us the clearest direction in the Scripture as to how we receive God's mercy amidst a crisis. He wants us to have faith or confidence in the time of crisis.
- B. God is looking for a specific response from His people in time of trouble. He does not leave us guessing as to what this response looks like that He desires. Joel 2:12-17 tells us exactly what we are to do to receive His mercy and deliverance.

XII. EXAMPLES OF RESPONDING TO GOD IN HUMILITY AND AVOIDING JUDGMENT

- A. In the days of the young King Josiah, a prophetess named Huldah worked in the king's court as a keeper of his wardrobe. Josiah learned that she had a prophetic anointing. Therefore, he sent word to her, asking her to inquire of the Lord for him. She pointed out to him that God promised through Moses to destroy Israel if they rejected God (Deut. 28:47-64). Josiah humbled himself when he received Huldah's word. Josiah's humility was further seen in that he, as the most powerful man in the nation, asked for spiritual help from a keeper of his wardrobe.

Thus says the Lord God, "Tell the man [King Josiah]... Behold, I will bring calamity on this place ... all the curses that are written in the book [Deut. 28:47-52] ... because they have forsaken Me ... therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place ... but as for the king ... speak to him, Thus says the LORD, ... because your heart was tender ... and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I have heard you. Surely ... you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place [Jerusalem] and its inhabitants." (2 Chr. 34:23-28)

1. The primary prophet in Josiah's day was Jeremiah who prophesied of the Babylonian invasion of Israel. Josiah received his ministry. The Lord had been prophesying of the Babylonian military invasion for several decades through prophets like Joel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah and even as far back as Isaiah (over 100 years earlier).
2. Josiah responded to these prophecies in a deep way. He led a partial spiritual reform before the Babylonian captivity. God saw his tenderness and wholeheartedness. The Lord answered because his heart was tender and because he humbled himself before God (2 Chr. 34:27). The Lord decided to delay the judgment of the Babylonian invasion until after Josiah's lifetime. Josiah died in 609 BC, around the time of Joel's ministry. The invasion began in 606 BC.

- B. Ahab was one of the most evil kings in Israel's history. He humbled himself in a time of judgment and received mercy. This is an amazing example of how far God's mercy will reach.

There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness ... ²⁶ He behaved very abominably in following idols ... ²⁷ So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. ²⁸ The word of the LORD came to Elijah saying, ²⁹ "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house." (1 Kgs. 21: 25-29)

- C. Manasseh was also one of the evil kings in Israel's history. He humbled himself and received God's mercy during a time of judgment (2 Chr. 33:9-13). Earlier in Manasseh's life, the Scripture described him as being under God's judgment (2 Kgs. 23:26).

When he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, ¹³ and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. (2 Chr. 33:12-13)

Session 10: God's Zeal to Release Blessing (Joel 2:18-27)

Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.¹⁹ The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations."²⁰ But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things."²¹ Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things!²² Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; for the open pastures are springing up, and the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their strength.²³ Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you-- the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.²⁴ The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.²⁵ "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you."²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame.²⁷ Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame." (Joel 2:18-27)

I. THE GREAT TRANSITION IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. A transition in the book of Joel occurs with one small word in Joel 2:18, "Then." Joel says, "Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and pity His people." In other words, when the people gather in solemn assemblies to cry out to God, then the Lord will be zealous for the land, and will have compassion on His people. Joel had just spoken of the "perhaps of God" saying that God may relent and leave a blessing behind if His people cried out to Him.
- B. God's zeal is aroused in response to prayer. The first half of the book of Joel is about crisis and the need for wholeheartedness in seeking to receive God's mercy. The second half of Joel begins with this word, "then." It goes on to give details about God's blessing and salvation for those who live in relationship with Him and cry out to Him.
- C. The primary themes in the second half of the book are about Israel's salvation, victory, and triumph over their enemies. God vindicates those who come before Him with a whole heart in fasting and prayer. The Lord loves to vindicate His people. When He does so, He also vindicates the truthfulness of His name and covenant-keeping nature.

- D. Joel describes God's deliverance to Israel. Remember the principle of "like kind, but lesser degree." He does not have to speak about Kansas City, Johannesburg, Berlin, or Melbourne to convey His zeal for believers everywhere. He has given Israel as a witness of the power and grace that He wants to express all over the earth (Isa. 43:10). What is written of Israel's story in the Scriptures is for our example (1 Cor. 10:11). The wisdom, power, and kindness shown in the way God leads this one nation is a picture of how He leads all the nations. What happens to Israel in the end times and millennial kingdom, both in terms of blessing and judgment, will also happen to other nations "in like kind, but lesser degree." Regardless of the fact that the rest of the nations will experience a lesser degree, both of revival and judgment, it will still be substantial.

II. GOD'S ZEAL FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL: MANIFESTING HIS SOVEREIGNTY

Then the LORD will be zealous for His land and pity [have compassion on] His people. (Joel 2:18)

- A. God describes Himself as zealous for His land.
- B. Jesus chose where He would be born, live, and die. He chose where He would make His grand entrance as King at His return, and from what place He would govern the millennial earth.

- C. God's zeal for the land of Israel is a new idea to many Gentile believers.

Thus says the LORD: "I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal." (Zech. 1:14)

Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.' (Zech. 8:2)

- D. The land of Israel is important to God. He has zeal for it. He has deep emotion for this little piece of land. The whole earth is the Lord's, yet Israel is His particular geographic inheritance. He chose Jerusalem as the place He would rule the millennial earth (Zech. 14:4, 16; Ps. 48). It is the city of the great King. He chose it from the beginning and established world history around it.

Jerusalem ... is the city of the great King. (Mt. 5:35)

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place. (Ps. 132:13)

- E. Israel is the center of the earth where three continents join. Europe, Asia, and Africa meet at this strategic place. Civilization itself was born and came forth from this region.

Thus says the Lord GOD: 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst [center, NIV, NAS] of the nations and the countries all around her.' (Ezek. 5:5)

- F. Satan also wants to rule Israel. Satan knows that Jesus has "backed Himself into a corner" so to speak, by promising not to return to earth until the leadership of Israel proclaims to Him, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt. 23:39). Throughout history, Satan has sought to destroy the Jewish people. Before Christ came, Satan tried to destroy the nation to prevent the birth of the Messiah (Rev. 12:1-5). Now he seeks to prevent the return of Christ by eliminating the people who must welcome Him back.

- G. God's zeal for the land of Israel is rooted in zeal for His own glory as He displays His sovereignty in the process of winning the Jewish people and ruling the earth from Jerusalem.
- H. His glory will be displayed in the fact that God chose a city before history began and then showed His sovereign power and patient love in bringing His purposes to pass in that city.
- I. Anyone who treats the land of Israel with injustice, whether Jew or Gentile, is in trouble with God.
- J. A dramatic reversal of history through supernatural intervention is coming to the nation of Israel; she will experience triumph over all her enemies by supernatural interventions—a drastic contrast! God will release supernatural blessing on Israel. He will take this weak nation and make it the leader of all the nations, displaying His own power in the process.

III. GOD'S COMPASSION MANIFESTED IN HEALING THE LAND

The LORD will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain, new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.” (Joel 2:19)

- A. God has great compassion for His people. One of the ways that He will manifest that compassion is through healing the land. God will heal the physical land of Israel by supernaturally blessing the agriculture.
- B. From God's point of view, Israel stretches from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15). The majority of this land that God promised Abraham is a barren desert, yet it will be healed by God. He will cause the agriculture to grow in a supernatural way. During the millennium, God will provide rain on Israel in an unprecedented way. From the beginning, the Lord set up a drama around the rain cycles in Israel to cause them to be dependent on God for it. Israel has rain in relation to their relationship to God. In contrast, the Nile River supplies Egypt with water providing fertile valleys without the same need for rain as Israel has. Israel possesses no such water supply as the Nile. If it does not rain, Israel will starve.
- C. Israel has known many droughts through the years, and much barrenness in the land. God has promised a great turnaround. He will be zealous to transform their barren land into abundant food provision. Isaiah spoke of this dramatic healing of the land. The desert will experience an agricultural miracle and become lush with life, flourishing with growth just like the garden of Eden (Isa. 51:3). The whole earth will be amazed at God's work there.
The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad ... the desert shall ... blossom as the rose;² It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice ... the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it. (Isa. 35:1-2)
- D. The fullness of this agricultural blessing will occur after Jesus returns. The fruit of His righteous government will be manifest in the agriculture, the atmosphere, and the livestock.

- E. Though the blessing described here comes to fullness after the Lord's return, the principles of God's kingdom never change. Whatever the Lord will do in the hour of full blessing, He will do now in part. The concept of God healing the land is a very important truth. The days are coming when blessed agriculture will be an issue of life and death in the Great Tribulation. We must know what is in God's heart related to agriculture and prayer and obedience.

IV. POLITICAL AND MILITARY BLESSING

"I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land ... His stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things." (Joel 2:19, 20)

- A. God not only promises to answer His people in terms of agricultural blessing, He has promised to give Israel political and military victory over all their enemies. They will triumph over the hostile nations as God makes them the head of the nations. The nation with the most reproach in history will lead all the nations in the millennial kingdom because the Lord has chosen it.

At that time [in the millennial kingdom] Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. (Jer. 3:17)

- B. When Jesus brings this history-defying revolution, all the nations of the earth will be amazed. Jesus will shock the nations by doing the impossible and taking the weakest, most reproached nation in history and causing them to rule the earth with humility. The leadership of Jesus will be startling as "kings shut their mouths at Him." (Isa. 52:15).
- C. All nations will stand against Israel (Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Zeph. 3:8; Ezek. 38:4). Satan will gather a great army to destroy Israel (Rev. 16:13-14; 19:19). There will be no chance of her deliverance and salvation from a natural point of view. Then suddenly Jesus will demonstrate His power and deliver Israel.
- D. The powerful kings of the earth will choose the oil of the Middle East over Israel. God set up the end-time drama by putting the oil in the Middle East, to test all nations.

- E. Joel highlighted an important detail of the end-time drama by prophesying that God would remove the northern army from Israel by driving them into a barren and desolate land.

I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, with his face toward the eastern sea and his back toward the western sea; his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise, because he has done monstrous things. (Joel 2:20)

- F. Joel was prophesying of a literal army that will come from the north in Joel's day (Babylon) and of another army that would come at the end of the age (Antichrist's kingdom). The defeat of the people from the north is a prominent theme of end-time prophecy (Ezek. 38-39).

- G. This end-time northern army of the Antichrist will be made up of a coalition of nations who attack Israel.
- H. Israel will have no military at this time, due to a peace treaty that this cunning, global leader will have made with her (Dan. 9:27; Ezek. 38:10-16). Suddenly, when her defenses are down, all her towns will be broken down and plundered. Israel will have no help from other nations. The biggest army in history, with the best weapons, the largest numbers, the most money, and the strongest coalition of nations, will come against weak Israel. After God gives them time to exercise their strength against Israel, Jesus will drive the northern army into a barren and desolate land, into the desert regions surrounding Israel. Israel's great military victory over the northern army will occur when Jesus returns.
- I. The Antichrist will do monstrous things to Israel. Jesus will defeat him and his army so completely that the stench of his dead army will arise (Joel 2:20). This will happen literally. Ezekiel prophesied that it would take Israel seven months to bury the multitudes of the slain soldiers from all the nations who come against them (Ezek. 39:12; Isa. 34:2-3). The stench and foul odor will arise from the rotting bodies of the slain army and will pollute the land.

V. BE GLAD AND REJOICE!

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvelous things! (Joel 2:21)

- A. Jesus will begin a process of political and agricultural blessing when He returns. He will progressively develop Israel over the next 1,000 years (Rev. 20). Under Jesus' leadership, the agriculture, the atmosphere, and the animals will be blessed in an unprecedented way.
- B. After describing Israel's triumph over the northern army, Israel's greatest enemy of all time, Joel cried out to the land and its inhabitants, "Fear not and be glad and rejoice!" Joel exhorted Israel to rejoice in the Lord and to not fear even before the victory was manifest—even while the hostile nations still surrounded them. Undoubtedly, this will be the last thing that Israel will want to hear as they endure the difficulties in the Great Tribulation! *Glad?* The Lord's message to Israel is that He is totally in control. He will bring a sudden reversal, and therefore, they should rejoice, ahead of time. God called Israel as a barren woman to sing for joy ahead of time, before she bears her children (Isa. 54:1).
- C. Once again, though the Lord is speaking directly to Israel, He gives this message to all the nations of the earth. We who live in the Americas, Asia, or Africa, etc. must receive the same message. The same applies to us. We too will see God's works when the Antichrist goes forth causing terror across the nations. The Lord wants us also to rejoice in His provision and direction because we trust Him. Just as He is in control in Israel, He is in control in every place on earth.

- D. The Lord even speaks to the beasts of the field about the renewal He will bring at His coming.
Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; for the open pastures are springing up, and the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their strength. (Joel 2:22)
- E. The Scripture describes severe worldwide famine during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:5-8). There will be droughts, earthquakes, and other severe disturbances in weather patterns, along with terrifying military invasions. All of these will contribute to famine. Yet, the Lord calls His people to be glad as they trust Him before the food is seen.
- F. The two main emotions in the earth will be fear and gladness. Jesus said that in that day, the nations of the earth would faint from fear (Lk. 21:26). Yet gladness and rejoicing will fill the whole Body of Christ (Isa. 24:14-16).
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)

They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; for the majesty of the LORD they shall cry aloud from the sea. ¹⁵ Therefore glorify the LORD in the dawning light ... ¹⁶ From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: "Glory to the righteous!" (Isa. 24:14-16)
- G. The Body of Christ will be in a worldwide worship movement, filled with praises even before the victory is manifest. We will live in a spirit of faith with gladness and rejoicing.
- H. Joel continues to exhort, saying, "Be glad children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord because He will faithfully give you rain."
Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. (Joel 2:23)
- I. The former rains are the autumn rains that come in October and November. They are the heaviest rains. They prepare the ground for plowing and sowing. After these former rains, it rains more lightly and more periodically from December to April. Then the latter rains come, or the spring rains, just before the harvest. These rains would bring the crop to maturity.
- J. Even when Jesus is on earth after the second coming, He will give rain as His people worship and pray (Zech. 10:1). He will refuse to give rain to those who do not worship with gladness. For example, the nations who refuse to worship Him will not receive rain on their land (Zech. 14:18).

- K. The Lord promises to restore to Israel the years that the swarming locust has eaten and to cause people to eat in plenty and be satisfied (Joel 2:25-26).

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. ²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. ²⁷ Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame. (Joel 2:25-27)

- L. He will give Israel double for all that was taken and lost (Isa. 40:2). The fullness of the promise will occur in the millennial kingdom. This reveals God's nature to answer His people with extravagance as we call on His name!
- M. In the Millennium, God will do wondrous things for His people (Joel 2:26). This is in contrast to the Antichrist who will do monstrous things against them (Joel 2:20). The wondrous and marvelous work of God will far surpass the monstrous work of the evil one.
- N. Joel goes on to say that by these extravagant actions of wonder and marvel, His people and the nations of the earth will know that He is the Lord (Joel 2:27). His ultimate goal is always and forever about intimacy. He wants His people to know and recognize that He is in their midst.
- O. Joel prophesied, "My people shall never be put to shame!" This "never" has not yet happened in history; Israel has nearly always been put to shame, if not in one season, then in the next. Yet there is coming a day when Israel will never again be put to shame. The weakest of all the nations will be ruler over all the earth that God might forever display His sovereignty!

Session 11: The End-Time Outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32)

It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰ And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ³² And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28-32)

I. THE PROMISE OF AN OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

- A. Joel prophesied that when we turn to God with all our heart in prayer with fasting the Lord would be zealous and compassionate and would pour out His Spirit on us (Joel 2:12, 18, 28).

It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh... (Joel 2:28)

- B. Jesus promised that if His disciples tarried in prayer, the Spirit would endue them with power.

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. (Lk. 24:49)

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you... (Acts 1:8)

- C. In Acts 1-2, the disciples followed the pattern described by Joel as they sought the promise given by Jesus. Thus, they gathered to pray in the upper room. After ten days, on the Feast of Pentecost the Spirit came on them with power (Acts 1:14-2:4). They were probably expecting the Joel 2:28 breakthrough of the Spirit at that time, since Jesus had recently promised it (Lk. 24:49). Peter explained this visitation of the Spirit as being that which was prophesied by Joel (Acts 2:16).

They went up into the upper room where they were staying ... ¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ... ^{2:1} Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues... (Acts 1:13-2:4)

Peter ... said to them, "Men of Judea ... let this be known to you ... ¹⁵ these are not drunk, as you suppose ... ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." (Acts 2:14-16)

- D. These ten days of prayer occurred in a strategic, prophetic timing. It was preceded first by the death and resurrection of Jesus and by a dynamic prayer history that included Israel's greatest intercessors. Jesus and John the Baptist had prayed fervently for God's blessing to be released as did Anna who prayed for sixty years (Lk. 2:37). In other words, the apostles stepped into a dynamic history of prayer that had been in developed before that Feast of Pentecost had come.

- E. What did Peter mean when he said this is what was spoken of by Joel? What did Joel speak of? Yes, he emphasized the fact that God would pour out the Spirit, but he also emphasized the conditions in which it would occur. Both are a part of the pattern seen in Joel 2. Peter was referring to the whole context of Joel 2, not just the end result of it. Thus, Peter was teaching us not only about the release of the Holy Spirit, but how we are to seek for it.
- F. The Joel 2:12-15 pattern of corporate prayer with fasting has been followed throughout church history resulting in many great revivals. In our day, we must also follow the Joel 2:12-15 pattern. The greatest revival is yet to come, surpassing what the church experienced in the book of Acts.
- G. The Church today must see the importance of gathering in corporate intercessory worship until God releases the fullness of His blessing. We have a rich history of prayer behind us—one that has continued from Moses, David, and Daniel, and then Jesus, Anna, and Paul, continuing through all Church history. The bowls of intercession in heaven are surely filling up (Rev. 5:8).

II. THE DOWNPAYMENT OF JOEL'S PROPHECY OCCURRED AT PENTECOST

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy... (Joel 2:28)

- A. God's promise to pour out His Spirit is the most well-known passage in the Book of Joel. Just prior to this point in his prophecy, Joel emphasized the agricultural blessings that God would release on Israel because of His zeal and pity, or compassion (Joel 2:18-27). Now Joel speaks of the coming spiritual blessing to renew the people (Joel 2:28-32).
- B. The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit that Joel prophesied was not completely fulfilled in Peter's generation. This is evidenced by significant differences between Joel 2 and Acts 2. The fullness of what Joel prophesied has still not yet happened. Only a portion of it was fulfilled in Peter's day. Joel said that the sun and the moon would grow dark and signs such as blood and smoke would be seen. The early church did not see these signs.
- C. Joel prophesied that there would be a great outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh, on all nations worldwide. In Acts 2, the Spirit only rested on 120 local Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and then on the three thousand who were saved that day. The fullness of Joel's prophecy requires a global dimension. Peter knew he was only experiencing the first fruits of Joel's prophecy. The full expression of it would not happen until Jesus returned to reign in Jerusalem. (Joel 3:16-21).

The LORD will ... utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake ...¹⁷ You shall know I am the LORD ... dwelling in Zion ... Jerusalem shall be holy... (Joel 3:16-17)

- D. Peter understood that only in the Millennium would Joel's prophecy be completely fulfilled when Jesus returned to lead the time of the restoration of all things.

Repent ... that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ ...²¹ whom heaven must receive [retain] until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)

III. THE TIMING OF JOEL'S PROPHESED OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

- A. Peter said that the outpouring of the Spirit would happen in the last days (Acts 2:17). The New Testament writers used the phrase "in the last days" on five occasions and in two different ways. In Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2 they refer to the last days as beginning in the generation of the book of Acts. However, in 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Peter 3:3 they refer to the last days as the generation that the Lord returns. James 5:3 could be used in either way. We know that the last days began on the day of Pentecost two thousand years ago and will culminate at the second coming of Jesus. This narrows down the time frame of Joel's prophecy.

Peter ... said to them, "Men of Judea ...¹⁵ these are not drunk, as you suppose ...¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:¹⁷ 'It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit..." (Acts 2:14-17)

God ... in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son... (Heb. 1:1-2)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come... (2 Tim. 3:1)

Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days... (2 Pet. 3:3)

Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. (Jas. 5:3)

- B. Joel prophesied of a great outpouring of the Spirit on all nations. When will the fullness of this take place? Joel tells us it will happen "afterwards" (Joel 2:28). Of course the question is: after what? It is after something specific. Some see the afterwards of v. 28 as a reference to the second coming. This is not possible because Joel makes clear in v. 31 that the prophetic spirit and signs in the heavens occur before the Day of the Lord or the second coming of Jesus.

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ...²⁹ I will pour out My Spirit in those days.³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens ...³¹ the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.³² Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance ...^{3:1} For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,² I will also gather all nations ... I will enter into judgment with them there... (Joel 2:28-3:2)

- C. In studying the options for what **afterwards** refers to, it is best to understand it in the context of Joel's call to fasting and prayer (Joel 2:12-17). In other words, **after** the times of corporate wholeheartedness, God will pour out His Spirit. It is as though Joel was saying, "When you cry out to the Lord with fasting and prayer, afterwards He will bless you by releasing His Spirit."
- D. Some commentators link the word **afterwards** to the passage just prior (Joel 2:21-27), when Joel prophesied of the agricultural blessings and the defeat of northern enemy (Joel 2:20) that God promised Israel in the Millennium. It will be a time in which Israel is never put to shame again (Joel 2:26-27). This will only happen after Jesus returns. However, Joel said in v. 31 that the prophetic spirit with signs in the sky would occur before Jesus returns and the Millennium starts.
- E. Another timing indicator is given when Joel twice used the phrase "in those days" (Joel 2:29; 3:1). This phrase ties together the events prophesied in Joel 2:28-32 into the same time frame as the events prophesied in Joel 3:1-21. The repeated use of this phrase makes clear that the themes in Joel 2 and Joel 3 go together and should not be separated. In other words, there should be no chapter division. Joel spoke of the outpouring as being at the time when Israel is surrounded by the Antichrist's armies and then is delivered from them. I will develop this in the next chapter.
- F. Since Joel 2 and Joel 3, in the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, are in the same time frame, we know that the outpouring of the Spirit will happen in the **same time period** as when the Lord gathers the captives of Israel from all nations to bring them back to Jerusalem. It will also be in the same time frame in which the Lord assembles all nations to come against Jerusalem so that He might destroy them. In other words, these events occur in the generation the Lord returns.

IV. OUR INHERITANCE IN THE PROPHETIC ANOINTING: ALL WILL PROPHECY

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. (Joel 2:28)

For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. (1 Cor. 14:31)

- A. At the time in which Joel spoke this prophecy, his ideas were new and strange to Old Testament Israel. The anointing of the Spirit had been given to just a few people in the Old Testament era, usually older Jewish men who were kings, judges, or prophets. However, Joel prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh—Jew and Gentile, men and women, young and old. In other words, every believer on the planet will experience the anointing of the Spirit. Paul quoted Joel 2:32 and then applied it universally to all believers (Rom. 10:12-13).

***There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord ... is rich to all who call on Him.** ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Rom. 10:12-13)*

- B. The only qualifier that Joel made to this all-inclusive promise to "all flesh," is the phrase, "My servants" (Joel 2:29). Thus, the "all flesh" are those who are servants of God. "My servants" does not speak of those who casually profess their faith, but to those who genuinely serve God.

On My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit... (Joel 2:29)

V. THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 19:10)

- A. We must not separate Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit of prophecy from its primary context in the end times when the great ingathering of souls occurs and the deception of the Antichrist abounds. Some do not value the prophetic ministry. They see it as optional, thus, they write it off as not for them. How can a true believer not be into the prophetic? If we are into the end-time harvest, if we love people and want to bring courage to the fearful, then we need prophetic input from the Spirit. Getting ready for the good and the bad events in the end times requires that we learn how to function in the prophetic anointing.
- B. The prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 gives us great confidence for a global outpouring of the Spirit. This outpouring will be an issue of life and death in context to the pressures of the Great Tribulation. We will need to operate with a prophetic spirit in precise ways. This is the inheritance of the entire end-time Church. We must contend for and earnestly seek it with sustained prayer with fasting. Paul exhorts us to seek the greater gifts, especially to prophecy (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1).

But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (1 Cor. 12:31)

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy. (1 Cor. 14:1)

- C. We seek to prophesy because the prophetic spirit is the key that opens us up to the other gifts of the Spirit. When we receive prophetic impressions from the Spirit, the other gifts flow forth.
- D. The promise that we will prophesy encompasses all that is involved in operating in the power and revelation of the Spirit. Prophecy reveals the testimony of what is in Jesus' heart and mind (Rev. 19:10). It involves receiving dreams, visions, and angelic visitations that impart the skill to understand end-time prophecy. Daniel received this type of anointing.

O Daniel, I [Gabriel] have now come forth to give you skill to understand.²³ ... I have come to tell you ... therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision. (Dan. 9:22-23)

- E. We will operate in the spirit of Elijah as John the Baptist did, who spoke God's word with power and authority to turn the hearts of people to God. Micah testified of experiencing prophetic power to preach God's word.

He [John the Baptist] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.¹⁷ He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Lk. 1:15-17)

But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. (Mic. 3:8)

- F. The Scripture is our anchor and light in darkness. In the end times many will be deceived by false signs and wonders. God will give us prophetic dreams and visions that we may help our friends and family to discern deception that will be fueled by false signs and wonders.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt. 24:24)

Jesus said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” (Mt. 24:4-5)

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (Mt. 24:11)

- G. The miracles released in the context of the prophetic anointing will be essential in winning deceived people to the Lord.

Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶ And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸ There was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8)

- H. The prophetic anointing will be essential for survival. Some of these dreams and visions will be a source of direction when life and death decisions need to be made in the Great Tribulation. Jeremiah spoke of God giving prophetic direction so that His people would find water for survival and walk in a straight way instead of walking into calamity, or the deceptions of the Antichrist.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble... (Jer. 31:9)

VI. THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY: COSMIC SIGNS IN THE END TIMES

I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Joel 2:30-31)

The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. (Joel 2:10)

The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. (Joel 3:15)

- A. In describing the outpouring of the Spirit in the end times, Joel gave three prophecies to Israel that the sun, moon, and stars would be dramatically altered as supernatural proof that the Messiah was in their midst (Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15). Joel also prophesied that there would be signs on the earth.

- B. God will show “wonders in the earth,” which will include manifestations of blood, fire, and pillars of smoke, as well as great healings like Jesus did. Blood is listed as one of the major signs because blood will flow in unprecedented amounts. Blood is seen in the first three trumpets and the second and third bowl judgments (Rev. 8:7-10; 16:3-4). The two witnesses will have authority to turn water into blood. Entire rivers will be turned to blood like in the days of Moses. The blood of nations will flow because they shed the blood of the martyrs.

You are righteous, O Lord ... because You have judged these things. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. (Rev. 16:5-6)

- C. Jesus said there would be great earthquakes and many fearful signs that would cause the nations to be perplexed and fearful as the powers of the sky are shaken.

There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of things ... for the powers of heaven will be shaken. (Lk. 21:25-26)

There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. (Lk. 21:11)

- D. God has planned the most dramatic display of prophetic signs in His commitment to help the end-time Church. These signs will be given at strategic times to signify significant messages to those who interpret them rightly. Prophetic signs will cause people to understand that they are living in the end times. These marvels will warn unbelievers to no longer refuse God’s Word.
- E. Joel connected these signs with prophetic dreams and visions and the pouring out of the Spirit. How astounding it will be when the whole world is watching as God’s prophets proclaim a dream or vision ahead of time giving exact details of when and where a comet or an earthquake will occur. The signs in the heavens and on earth will not just appear in a vacuum, but at the precise timing that God determines as His servants declare them ahead of time.
- F. The sun and moon will be affected by God’s power in response to the intercession of the Church and through prophetic decrees as in the days of Elijah. The miracles that Moses did had a great impact on Egypt and Israel. The river turned to blood at the moment he commanded it to. Such signs confirmed Moses’ prophetic messages. The signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth will also be used to bring in a great ingathering of souls.
- G. Some interpret the promise of signs in Joel 2:30-31 as being purely symbolic. In doing this, they see Joel’s prophecy as being symbolically fulfilled in the past events of history. Regarding the phrase “the heavens tremble,” some say that the heavens did not actually tremble because it is only meant to be understood as prophetic poetry. These cosmic signs are not to be dismissed as symbolic poetry. The biblical approach to these cosmic signs is to take them literally.

VII. ISRAEL ASKS FOR PROPHETIC SIGNS

- A. Joel gave three prophecies that God would give Israel signs in the sun, moon, and stars to confirm that the Messiah was among them (Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15). They expected the Messiah to demonstrate His power with God by having power over the sun, moon, and stars! Therefore, the Pharisees asked Jesus for a heavenly sign as proof of His messiahship.

The Pharisees ... testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. (Mt. 16:1)

- B. They reasoned that if Jesus was from God, He should prove it with signs. They wanted more proof than seeing Him heal the sick; they wanted signs in the sky that could not be explained away. Even today in Israel, some who look for the Messiah expect Him to fulfill Joel's prophecies in demonstrating His power over the sun, moon, and stars. Jews expect God to reveal Himself to them in signs. Many of them will get saved as the Church releases prophetic signs.

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after [philosophical] wisdom... (1 Cor. 1:22)

VIII. END-TIME DELIVERANCE AND THE HARVEST

It shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:32)

So all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob..." (Rom. 11:26)

- A. Joel prophesied that whoever calls upon Jesus' name in the end times will be saved. Being saved has several distinct dimensions to it in the Scripture.
- B. First, we are saved in the initial sense of receiving forgiveness and being born again.
- C. Second, we are saved, delivered, or protected, from physical death in the context of end-time disasters. Psalm 91 promises us physical protection in the end times.

Surely He shall deliver you from ... perilous pestilence.⁵ You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,⁶ nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. 9 Because you have made ... the Most High your dwelling place,¹⁰ no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling... (Ps. 91:3-10)

- D. Third, we are saved in the sense that God will provide the things necessary for life such as food and water. Israel experienced provision and protection in Goshen (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 6, 26).
- E. Fourth, we are saved as we walk in God's saving power that we might enter into our full destiny. In other words, we are delivered from spiritual barrenness and powerlessness.

- F. Fifth, we are saved or protected from deception and from falling away from our faith.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons ... ² having their conscience seared... (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

IX. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:32)

- A. A remnant of Jewish survivors will live through all the difficulties in the end times. Though many in Jerusalem will be destroyed, there will be a remnant that God spares physically and then saves in the spiritual sense (Rom. 11:26).
- B. Jerusalem will be one of the most violent cities on earth, being surrounded by hostile armies. Yet in this most dangerous place, there will be those who enjoy God's protection and deliverance. Joel prophesies that the remnant of Israel living in Jerusalem in the end times will be delivered.
- C. This promise will be very important to some unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. The Church will prophesy this passage to them. We will declare, "God has promised supernatural deliverance to those who call upon His name. His name is Yeshua! He is Jesus! He is your salvation!" Some of them will respond by calling on the name of Jesus and they will be delivered and saved.
- D. This prophecy also comforts believers who live outside of Jerusalem. The logic is that if God's protection works in the center of the hostility, how much more will it work in other places?

X. COSMIC SIGNS IN THE END-TIMES – EXTRA STUDIES

- A. In Israel's salvation history, God often gave them signs to verify a prophet's word. They do not have the paradigm of a true prophet who does not show signs and wonders. They want earthly signs like healings and they want heavenly signs in the atmosphere above. The God of Abraham, Isaac, David, Moses, and Elijah does miracles when His prophets speak!
- B. Haggai prophesied that God would shake heaven (sky), earth, sea, dry land, and all nations.
"I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of all nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts ... ²² "I will shake heaven and earth. ²² I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms." (Hag. 2:6-7, 21-22)

- C. Jesus prophesied that there would be cosmic signs in the end times.

“There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.” (Lk. 21:11)

“There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 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. 21:25-26)

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” (Mt. 24:29-30)

- D. There are cosmic signs in the book of Revelation.

The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. ¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs... (Rev. 6:12-13)

The first angel sounded: hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up ... ⁸ The second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea ... ¹⁰ Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers ... ¹² Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. (Rev. 8:7-12)

- E. There are cosmic signs in the book of Isaiah.

For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. (Isa. 13:10)

- F. Wonders in the heavens (Joel 2:30) will be seen as the heavens tremble (Joel 2:10) and shake (Joel 3:15; Isa. 13:10; 24:23; 60:1; Ezek. 32:7-8).

1. **Sun** – will turn to darkness (Joel 2:31); it will grow dark (Joel 3:15); one third of the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened (Rev. 8:12); the sun will go down at noon as the earth is darkened (Amos 8:9); there will be deep darkness on the earth (Isa. 60:1).
2. **Moon** – will be turned into blood (Joel 2:31; 3:15) and will grow dark (Joel 2:10; 3:15).
3. **Stars** – will diminish their brightness (Joel 2:10; 3:15) and not give light (Isa. 13:10) and will fall to the earth (Rev. 6:13; Mt. 24:29).
4. **Sky** – will have strange weather patterns (Lk. 21:11) and scorching heat (Rev. 16:8; 7:16) with hail (Rev. 8:7; 11:19; 16:21) and lightning and thunder (Mt. 24:27; Rev. 8:5; 16:18).

XI. WONDERS IN THE EARTH: BLOOD, FIRE, SMOKE, EARTHQUAKES

- A. **Blood** – (Joel 2:30) includes the blood of the martyrs (Rev. 6:10; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2); blood in the sea and rivers (Rev. 8:7-9) with the power to turn the waters to blood (Rev. 11:6) as blood flows in the nations (Rev. 14:20; 19:13; Isa. 63:3).

Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. ⁴ Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (Rev. 16:3-4)

- B. **Fire** – (Joel 2:30) will be thrown to earth from heaven (Rev. 8:5) as it burns 1/3 of the trees (Rev. 8:7); a great star like burning fire will fall from heaven (Rev. 8:10); fire will kill multitudes (Rev. 9:18); the two witnesses will have power to call fire on their enemies (Rev. 11:5-6); the False Prophet will also call fire come from heaven (Rev. 13:13), power to scorch men with fire from the sun (Rev. 16:8:7:16). God's judgment fires will destroy cities as it destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire will descend from heaven by the command of the two witnesses.

If anyone wants to harm them [two witnesses], fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. If anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. (Rev. 11:5)

He [False Prophet] performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. (Rev. 13:13)

- C. **Pillars of smoke** – (Joel 2:30) the sun and air will be darkened by the smoke of the bottomless pit as it is opened (Rev. 9:2); smoke will kill many people (Rev. 9:18); smoke will be seen by many as Babylon burns (Rev. 18:9, 18). Smoke from cities that are destroyed by fire from terrorism, military conflict, the False Prophet, and God's judgment will fill the skies.

- D. There are several categories of fire and smoke. When the saints gather in prayer, God's fire will fall as it did in the early church (Acts 2:1-4). The Lord will release the smoke of His glory.

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. (Rev. 15:8)

Then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. (Isa. 4:5)

- E. **Earthquakes** – (Lk. 21:11; Mt. 24:7; Mk. 13:8; Rev. 6:12; 11:19; 16:18; Isa. 29:6); a great earthquake will occur in Israel (Ezek. 38:19; Zech. 14:5; Joel 2:10; 3:15)

- F. **False signs/wonders** – Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 18:23; 19:20; Mt. 24:24; 2 Thes. 2:8-9

- G. **True signs/wonders** – Acts 2:17-21; Mk. 16:7; Jn. 14:12; Rev. 11:3-6

- H. **End-time prophets** – Acts 2:17-21; Eph. 4:11-13; Rev. 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24

Session 12: End-Time Judgment on Israel's Enemies (Joel 3:1-8)

“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. ³ They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. ⁴ Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; ⁵ because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. ⁶ Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders. ⁷ Behold, I will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them, and will return your retaliation upon your own head. ⁸ I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD has spoken.” (Joel 3:1-8)

I. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

- A. Jesus is going to return to the earth. The events that precede and follow His return will constitute the greatest drama that will unfold before the eyes of all mankind, especially Israel. It will be a drama unsurpassed by any movie that has ever been produced, any story of heroism that was ever told. It is the great story that God purposed from eternity.
- B. When Jesus returns, hostile anti-Semitic nations will have once again imprisoned and taken Jewish people captive, even scattering some of them across the nations. There will be another deportation of Jewish captives before the Lord returns. We do not know the number or percentage of citizens that will be taken. Zechariah prophesied that half the city of Jerusalem will be taken into captivity. How staggering! About 600,000 Jews currently live in Jerusalem. Half the city of Jerusalem being deported could be as many as 300,000 Jewish people!

For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:2)

- C. Jesus prophesied that Israel would fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. This prophecy was partially fulfilled in 70 AD. In no sense did the Jews go into all nations as captives. In other words, the greatest fulfillment of this prophecy will occur in the generation in which Jesus returns when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. The Antichrist will establish prison camps, especially in Egypt and Assyria. Ancient Assyria includes areas in parts of modern-day Jordan, Syria, and Iraq (see the notes at the end of this session).

They [Israel] will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Lk. 21:24)

- D. After the rapture, Jesus will march through these nations killing His enemies and liberating Jewish prisoners in death camps and healing the infirm (blind, lame, etc., Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1; 42:6-7, 16; Mic. 4:6). Jesus will function as the “greater Moses.” An essential part of the second coming procession involves Jesus marching from Egypt through Assyria back to Israel, liberating Jews in death camps. The biblical message of these end-time events is politically incorrect to all (Jews, Christians, and Muslims).
- E. Jesus the great Deliverer will show Himself strong on their behalf. At that time the sun will be darkened, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. God will distress the nations and men’s hearts will fail them from fear (Mt. 24:29; Lk. 21:25-27). Then, as the captives tremble in their prisons, void of all hope of liberation, the Son of Man will be seen coming on the clouds with power and great glory. The captives will lift up their heads to see their redemption drawing near.
- F. When Jesus marches up through Edom (Jordan) as declared in Isaiah 63:1-6, He will function as the greater Moses as He releases the bowl judgments on the Antichrist as the “end-time Pharaoh.” He will gather Israel as He opens prison doors and liberates Jews in prison camps (Ps. 102:20; Isa. 27:12-13; 40:11; 42:7, 16, 22; 49:9-12, 21, 24-26; 61:1; Jer 30:3, 8, 10, 17; 31:16, 23; Ezek. 39:23-29; Joel 3:1-2; Amos 9:14; Mic 2:12-13; 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 10:10; 13:8; 14:2; Mt. 25:43; Lk. 21:24).
- G. Some of Israel will go into captivity in the end times: Ps. 102:20; Isa. 27:13; 42:7, 22; 49:9, 21, 24-26; 61:1; Jer. 30:3, 8, 10, 17; 31:16, 23; Ezek. 39:23-29; Joel 3:1-2; Amos 9:14; Mic. 4:6; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 13:8; 14:2; Mt. 25:43; Lk. 21:24. Jesus will assemble the remnant and captives of Israel, especially from Egypt and Assyria (parts of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan): Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 5:6; 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11. Israel will suffer affliction and desolation (Isa. 6:11-12; 30:26; 35:10; 58:12; 60:14-15, 18; 61:4; 62:4; 49:17-26; Jer. 30:3-8; 31:23; Ezek. 36:33-38; Mic. 2:12-13; 4:6; Zeph. 3:19-20); Jesus will gather Israel: Isa. 27:12; 40:11; 42:16; 49:9-12; Mic. 2:12-13; 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 10:10. Israel will have captives: Isa. 14:1-3; 11:14; 19:23; 45:14; 60:10, 12, 14; 61:5; Joel 3:8.

II. WHY DO WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THIS?

- A. First, Jews being in prison camps in the end times is one of the most prominent features in second coming passages (in the OT prophets). This truth is usually dismissed and ignored. This reveals the nature of Satan’s rage against Israel as well as the intense measure that God will use to purify Israel and the Church. God requires the Church to stand with Israel in this (Corrie ten Boom, Bonhoeffer, etc.). The Church is brought to maturity and evaluated based on our responses to Jesus’ leadership in standing with Israel (Mt. 25:31-46). Many who profess faith in Jesus will fall away from the faith at this time. One litmus test of obedience will be in standing with Israel during and after the Great Tribulation (Mt. 25:31-46). The Church will be persecuted (Dan. 7:21, 25). The issue of Israel will bring the whole world to full conflict.

- B. Second, it gives us insight into God's heart to suddenly reverse judgment as He restores His people who are under His discipline because of their sin. As God's people repent, God will restore much, especially in the age to come (Isa. 49:18-21). Israel forsook God, but God did not forsake Israel. He pursued her with His judgments to wake her up to His grace. God, who does this for Israel as an atheistic nation, will act in this same way towards all who call on Him.
- C. Third, many second coming passages in the Old Testament cannot be understood without seeing this major part of the end-time drama. The drama is magnificent in fascinating our heart.

III. FIVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES OF JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL

- A. Many Jewish people will be deported out of the land of Israel against their will. They will be taken away as captives. We do not know how many this will affect. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus will liberate prisoners at the time of His second coming. Some of those in Israel will flee, some will stay in Jerusalem; and, of those who stay, some will be supernaturally protected and some will join the evil regime of the Antichrist. Still others will be raised up by God as missionaries, "sent ones" to come and go to the nations. There will be different responses to God in Israel during this time period.
- B. ***Apostate Israel:*** some will stay in the land and worship the Antichrist, joining his regime, thus, becoming reprobate. They will probably not be deported from the land.
- C. ***Apostolic Israel:*** some will remain in the land of Israel with supernatural protection (deliverance specifically in Jerusalem: Joel 2:32; 3:16; Zech. 12:10; Isa. 4:3; Obad. 17; deliverance for Israel in general: Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Isa. 42:7, 49:8-14; Ps. 37:40; 91:1-16; 102:20; Mt. 24:22; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 3:10; 7:3; 14:1). God will call believers to live in Israel during the Great Tribulation. Some of them will come and go, doing the will of God in the midst of chaos and danger. There will be anointed apostolic believers, young and old, who will be sent from Israel to the nations in the spirit of Isa. 66:19. They will come and go, doing the will of God right in the midst of the chaos. Believers in the land will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air at the rapture. If they are unsaved, they see Jesus as He enters Israel at His second coming.
- D. ***Israel in flight:*** some leave the land of Israel under divine direction. Jesus taught, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place ... then let those who are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains" (Mt. 24:15, 16). In other words, "When you see this evil leader desecrating the temple in Jerusalem and demanding that the whole earth worship him, then flee!" Isaiah refers to the preserved ones of Israel who will be restored (Isa. 49:6).
- E. ***Israel in prison:*** Some will be taken from the land as prisoners (Zech. 14:2; Isa. 42:7, 22; 49:9, 24-25; Ps. 102:20)

- F. **Israel killed:** Some will die in Israel because of being persecuted for righteousness and others will die under the judgment of God. Zechariah prophesied that 2/3 of the nation will be killed (Zech. 13:8).
- G. Summary: some will flee, others will be deported as captives, some will stay in Jerusalem. Of those who stay, some will be supernaturally protected and some will join the evil regime of the Antichrist. Still others will be raised up by God as missionaries—sent ones—to come and go to the nations. There will be different responses among Jewish people during this time period.

IV. JOEL PROPHESED THE RETURN OF JEWISH CAPTIVES TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL

In those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem... (Joel 3:1)

- A. Instead of winding the book down to a slow end, Joel continues to bring the message to a crescendo of revelation. The significance of his proclamation is building and broadening to a global dimension. Joel 3 is a continuation from Joel 2; there is no break in Joel's thought. The great outpouring of God's Spirit occurs in the same time period as when He brings back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem. Who are the captives and where have they been? These are the captives from Israel—citizens of Jerusalem and Judah that were scattered through the nations.
- B. There will be five things that will happen simultaneously in this dramatic time period as seen in Joel 2:28-3:2. First, there will be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29). Second, there will be supernatural deliverance of the Jews who call out to the Lord (Joel 2:32). Third, will be the appearing of terrifying signs in the heavens (Joel 2:31). Fourth, is the liberation of Jews who were in prison camps. Fifth, is God's judgment on the anti-Semitic nations (Joel 3:2). These five events will happen in the same time frame referred to as, "in those days" and "at that time" (Joel 3:1).
- C. Many passages in the Scripture speak of Jewish people becoming prisoners and being scattered among the nations in the generation that the Lord returns. Jesus will "bring back the captives" when He returns. This was not totally fulfilled in 1948, when Israel became a nation.
- D. Although some commentators interpret the captives of Joel 3:1 as the Jewish people imprisoned throughout history, the context is very specific, pointing to the time of the end-time outpouring of the Spirit. The glory that follows these captives will outweigh their suffering.
- E. Jesus said that the Lord anointed Him to preach good tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison for those who are bound (Isa. 61:1). We often limit this to the spiritual deliverance that Jesus brought at His first coming. This will not be completely fulfilled until Jesus comes to reign as King on the earth. Jesus will open real prison doors. The captives will walk to Jerusalem as the Lord gives them supernatural ways to find water, food, and direction along the way (Isa. 49:10-12; Jer. 31:9). In 1945, immediately after World War II was over, multitudes walked across Europe, returning to their burned cities. In the same way, at the end of the Tribulation, millions of refugees will walk across the earth, returning to their nations.

V. GATHERING ALL NATIONS

I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. (Joel 3:2)

- A. The Lord will first gather all the nations together for judgment. He will bring them down into a specific geographic place—the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There is no place in Israel with this name. Therefore, some see this passage as only symbolic of God's judgment. I believe that the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12) is the Valley of Berachah, and is where Jehoshaphat gathered the people to bless the Lord after they won a great battle against Ammon and Moab (2 Chr. 20:26, 16). Joel also called this the valley of decision! (Joel 3:14). The Armageddon Campaign will end with the Battle of Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat just outside Jerusalem.

Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated ...²⁴ When Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies ... no one had escaped.²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found ... an abundance of valuables...more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil ...²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah. (2 Chr. 20:22-26)

- B. Why is the Lord bringing judgment to the nations in Joel 3? One reason is because of their horrific treatment of Israel, His inheritance.

VI. THREE REASONS FOR GOD'S GLOBAL JUDGMENT

I will also gather all nations ... and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.³ They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. (Joel 3:2-3)

- A. The judgment of the nations is related in part to their bad treatment of the Jewish people. In Joel 3:2-3, Joel reveals three specific sins that the nations have committed throughout history. First, they have scattered God's heritage, Israel, among the nations. Second, they have divided up God's land. Third, they have enslaved, or cast lots, for God's people, the Israelites. However, in the generation in which the Lord returns, these sins will reach their greatest measure.
- B. **Scattering Israel** – the nations still seek to scatter the people of Israel from the land and they will succeed to some degree for a short time. This is a terrifying idea to the people in Israel. Yet the greater point of the passage is not what man will do to Israel, but what God will do to the nations that do this to Israel. The nations involved in this persecution should tremble and be afraid.

- C. ***Dividing up the land*** – God charges the Gentile nations for dividing His land and using it in ways contrary to His purpose. He will bring them into judgment over this issue. This speaks of the way the nations have seized the land of Israel and divided geographic areas for their own agenda, making their own political domains and governmental divisions. This is what the Antichrist will do when he sets up part of his headquarters in Israel. He will use the nation for his own purposes, in spite of this warning.
- D. ***Enslaving the Israelites*** – God's third controversy with the Gentile nations is that they have and will continue to cast lots for the people of Israel. In other words, they have enslaved His people and put them in prison (Joel 3:6). This will again be a great crime that they commit in the end times. Joel specifies that they have given a Jewish boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a Jewish girl for wine, that they may drink (Joel 3:3). In other words, they degraded and devalued young Jewish boys to such a degree that they used him as payment for a brief moment with a prostitute. They have sold a young girl in exchange for one glass of wine, esteeming her life as of less worth. God's dispute with these nations is that they have so despised the lives of the Jewish people, counting them as worthless. They sold them in large numbers at a price that was very low because there was not a large market for them.
- E. The three transgressions—scattering the Jews among the nations, dividing up the land, and selling the people into slavery—have all happened at various times and at different levels of intensity throughout history, but they will have their ultimate expression in the time of Jacob's Trouble. God is angry about these three sins.
- F. Perhaps the greatest portrayal of this treatment of the Jewish people was seen in Nazi prison camps from 1941–1945. I believe that the primary interest in the Jewish captives by many of Hitler's officers was economic. They wanted their possessions plus the benefit of their free slave labor in industries. The Nazis traded Jewish people for a couple of crates of wine.
- G. Israel will face anti-Semitism that will be more severe than what they encountered from Nazi Germany during WWII. It will be the most severe time in Jewish history. The greatest suffering that will ever be experienced is appropriately named *Jacob's Trouble* (Dan. 12:1; Jer. 30:7).
- H. WWII was the worst time of suffering ever seen in human history. However, the enslaving and selling of Jewish people and their release into great prosperity as prophesied by Joel was not completely fulfilled in the 1940s—it is yet to come.
- I. Jacob's trouble will occur in the end times during the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:7; 12:1; Mt. 24:21). What Israel will experience in the generation in which the Lord returns will be more difficult than what occurred in the 1940s in Europe. We do not serve the Jewish people well by hiding the reality of Jacob's Trouble or by telling them that it has already passed.

VII. GOD'S CHALLENGE TO THE NATIONS

“Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? but if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; ⁵ because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. ⁶ Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders. ⁷ Behold, I will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them, and will return your retaliation upon your own head. ⁸ I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD has spoken.” (Joel 3:4-8)

- A. Joel records a “dialogue” between God and the obstinate nations who resist Him by persecuting Israel. Though the exact words of the nations are not recorded, God’s response to them reveals their position before Him. It is this arrogant posture that the Lord challenges when He says, “Indeed, what have you to do with Me?” (Joel 3:4). He is cross-examining them: “Do you think there is any agreement between us in what you are doing?” They are provoked by God’s claim that He is going to judge them for their treatment of Israel; out of their mouths spurt offensive declarations to the effect of, “We are not worried about God! You will not prevail over us!”
- B. Addressing Tyre, Sidon, and all of the coasts of Philistia, God asks, “Will you retaliate against Me?” Historically, these nations have rebelled against God. In Joel’s day, this was partially fulfilled. Tyre and Sidon are modern-day Lebanon, the country north of the nation of Israel; Philistia was a geographic area in the southwest of Israel (modern-day Gaza area). The name Palestinians comes from the Philistines. Currently, Lebanon has great hostility towards Israel. The Palestinians are still doing what they did in the days of old. In Joel 3, the Lord speaks to Lebanon and the Palestinians of today, using their ancestral names. They will be at the center of this resistance against Israel in the end times.
- C. To these nations, the Lord essentially says, “Do you think that you will retaliate against Me? Do you think that you will resist My will and defeat Me because you are in alignment with the Antichrist’s worldwide government? Do you think that you will stop Me, because you, little nations, can hide under the shadow of larger nations that you allied with? Do you think that will change your standing before Me?” God uses the word “*retaliate*” as though they were paying Him back for something He did wrong. Yet what they retaliate against is the covenant He made with Abraham to give the Jewish people the land. As Joseph’s brothers despised him because of his favor and his calling, so the unbelieving Gentile nations despise Israel. They are furious toward the Lord and Israel because of promises He made to Israel. Enraged by His covenant, they challenge God as though they have a just case. They charge God with misbehavior.
- D. God will answer this stubborn resistance of the nations. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord tells us some of the reasons that the nations despise Israel.

“Therefore, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you.” (Ezek. 35:11)

- E. God tells the hostile nations that the reason they hate Israel is because of bitterness, anger, greed, and envy. He says in essence, “You have animosity towards them because you want what is theirs, including their gold and possessions.” Cutting through their political rhetoric, He exposes their motivations. The nations are angry because they want what God has given Israel.
- F. The Lord promises to swiftly and speedily judge them. This swift judgment has yet to occur.
- Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; ⁵ Because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. ⁶ Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders. (Joel 3:4-6)*
- G. The Lord continues with His promises of judgment upon these nations:
- Behold, I will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them, and will return your retaliation upon your own head. ⁸ I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD has spoken. (Joel 3:7-8)*
- H. As a warning to the nations, the Lord declares in detail how He will judge them. This divine retaliation had a partial fulfillment in history, yet once again, it is not only a history lesson, but a declaration of what is to come. This judgment happened in history as a pattern of what will happen once again in these nations in the end times. These very nations will again enter into the same conflict with God, and He will once again bring the same judgment on them.
- I. The main point emphasizes God’s zeal to confront those who abuse Israel and to reward those who involve themselves in honoring God’s sovereignty by serving His purpose in Israel. There is a cause and effect in the reward and judgment that He will administer.
- J. All will sow and reap according to how they treat Israel. If the small nations are judged for these things, how much more will the superpowers be judged for doing them? The Lord will gather all nations together for judgment (Joel 3:2), not just the small nations (Joel 3:4).

VIII. THE UNDERLYING POWER OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

- A. God’s sovereignty is the foundational premise behind the entire story of human history. God has the right to decide **who** He chooses to be first in authority when He establishes the millennial kingdom. He chose the Jewish people. He has the right to choose **where**, and He chose the city of Jerusalem, and the land of Israel. He has the right to choose **what** He was to do. He chose to rule the entire government of the earth for 1,000 years. He has the right to choose **when** would be the best time to begin to rule. God chooses **how** the great drama will end. He has chosen to gather the nations together in a military conflict or what we refer to as the Armageddon Campaign.

- B. In our unrenewed thinking, we do not like this. We want God to choose our nation to rule the earth from. He chose Israel (Ps. 132:13-14). Any place that God would choose as His capital city would be attacked by Satan with great hostility.
- C. God chose Israel and has orchestrated all history to reveal the glory of His name.
Say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned..." (Ezek. 36:22)
- D. God's call on Israel is rooted in God glorifying His own name. The issue is not about Israel being God's favorite, but about the Father's sovereignty over the nations. On the other extreme, some Gentile believers get so caught up with Israel that they worship Israel instead of Jesus.
- E. The covenant God made was not about Israel, but about His sovereignty. It is about Jesus displaying His splendor to all the earth. It is not about Gentile people being unimportant to Him. He cares intensely about all people, whether they are Israelites or Gentiles. Yet God has based His covenants upon geographic areas and bloodlines and these covenants are important to Him. Once we have the revelation of His sovereignty, we see that it is not an issue of which city or nation God has chosen, but simply that He has chosen it. It is God glorifying Jesus.
- F. God's sovereign choosing of Israel was seen in the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:3). Abraham was a Gentile from Ur of the Chaldeans, or modern-day Iraq. Abraham was a Gentile. He would have been an Iraqi if he had been born in the 21st century. God promised to bless all the nations through Abraham's offspring (Gen. 12:3).

IX. JESUS' ACTIVITY AT THE SECOND COMING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

- A. There is significant information in the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus' second coming. There are two often overlooked aspects. First, Israel being desolate in prison camps. Second, Jesus leading Jewish captives in an Exodus-type journey back to Israel (Isa. 42:14-17).
- B. One of the primary end-time themes emphasized in the Old Testament is that of Jesus killing His enemies, releasing Jewish prisoners, and healing the infirm (blind, lame, etc.), then marching them to Israel on a highway through Egypt and Assyria on an Exodus-type journey.
The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me ... He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison... (Isa. 61:1)
I, the LORD ... will give You as a covenant to the people ... ⁷ to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. (Isa. 42:6-7)
I will bring the blind by a way they did not know ... ²² But this is a people [Israel] robbed and plundered; all of them are snares in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; they are for prey, and no one delivers; for plunder, and no one says, "Restore!" (Isa. 42:16, 22)

In that day ... I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast. (Mic. 4:6)

That You [Jesus] may say to the prisoners, “Go forth,” to those who are in darkness, “Show yourselves.” (Isa. 49:9)

- C. Israel is described as being desolate (oppressed, sick, infirm), in prison camps and assaulted by foreign armies. The Church will be deeply involved in this drama as God's messengers. Jesus will suddenly bring deliverance that reverses all Israel's oppression as He kills her enemies and heals their bodies. Jesus will then restore Israel to the land with God's favor making her the nation that leads all the nations of the earth.

- D. Israel is pictured as completely shattered in the end times.

I heard the man clothed in linen ... he held up his right hand ... and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time [3½ years]; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Dan. 12:7)

- E. Micah and Jeremiah declared that the Lord is responsible for afflicting Israel at this time.

“In that day,” says the LORD, “... I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted”⁷ ... the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. (Mic. 4:6-7)

I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back ...⁸ the LORD who brought up and led ... the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them. (Jer. 23:3-8)

- F. Jesus releases prisoners (Isa. 49:9, 19-21, 24-25), then takes the captives to Israel (Isa. 49:9-12). God gives Jesus as a covenant to the nations (Isa. 42:6) that results in restoring the earth from the curse of sin to its millennial glory. The desolate heritages of the earth will come under His leadership. Jesus will free prisoners at the time of His second coming.

Thus says the LORD: “... in the day of salvation ... I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;⁹ that You may say to the prisoners, ‘Go forth,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’ They shall feed along the roads, and their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.¹⁰ They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them.” (Isa. 49:8-10)

- G. Jesus will take the captives on an Exodus-type journey back to Israel (Isa. 49:9-12). This is deliberately described in a way that is to be understood as a repeat of the Exodus. God guided Israel with the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 12:21) and led them to water (Ex. 17:6).

They shall feed along the roads, and their pastures shall be on all desolate heights.¹⁰ They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them.¹¹ I will make each of My mountains a road, and My highways shall be elevated.¹² Surely these shall come from afar [East]; Look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim [Egypt or the South]. (Isa. 49:9-12)

1. They will graze on desolate high hills and mountains. He will lead them in a way that keeps them safe from the searing heat of the desert sun. The white blazing sand of the desert reflects the sun's rays nearly as severely as the rays themselves.
 2. Even the weakest will be able to walk on these roads. God calls these mountains, "My mountains." He will level them and remove all other obstacles to His mandate in bringing Israel home.
 3. They will come from every corner of the earth (Isa. 43:6; 49:22). They shall also come from the land of Sinim (Gen. 10:17). The land of the Sinim or Syenites (v12) stands for Aswan in southern Egypt (Ezek. 29:10; 30:6).
- H. Jesus will lead His people with tender compassion as He provides for every need. He will provide water in this desert journey to Israel.

The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water... (Isa. 35:7)

X. GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL (ISA. 49:17-26)

- A. God promises to restore Israel after she has been laid waste during the Great Tribulation.
- Your sons shall make haste [to return to Israel]; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste shall go away from you [be killed].**¹⁸ **Lift up your eyes, look around and see; all these gather together and come to you. "As I live," says the LORD, "You shall clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does."** (Isa. 49:17-18)*
- B. Jesus will gather Israel from the nations; causing mother Israel to be adorned with her children as a bride is adorned with her wedding dress (Isa. 51:11, 16, 18-20; 52:1; 54:1-8; 66:7-14). Israel's children will be her glory (Isa. 61:10; Zech. 9:16).
- C. God promises to restore Israel after her destruction during the Great Tribulation. God promises to reverse things so that Gentiles serve Israel. Isaiah described end-time Israel as the "land of destruction" that is wasted and made desolate as her children are lost (killed) while she becomes a wandering captive nation.
- "For your waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants; and those who swallowed you up will be far away."**²⁰ **The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, 'The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell.'**²¹ **Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, since I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; but these, where were they?'"** (Isa. 49:19-21)*
1. Wretched Israel thought she was finished without hope of recovery. Suddenly, because of Jesus' return, she will be utterly amazed as her children fill the land to overflowing. She is stunned over the turn of events. To "say in her ears" means to "say in her hearing."

2. She is pictured as thinking to herself about this indescribable reversal of fortunes. She is overwhelmed with joy as she asks, “Who is responsible for doing this” for Israel? God answers this question in the next verse (v. 22).
- D. Jesus, at the second coming, will raise up a royal standard to call Israel’s children from the nations to come to Israel. Jesus will raise His hand in power, causing Gentile kings to serve His purpose in Israel. Jesus will raise His royal standard that all nations will know that He has been crowned king. To raise His standard is to enforce what is implied by Him taking active leadership in the nations. Jesus will publish (make known) His decrees about Israel. Jesus will require that Israel’s children be taken home from the nations.

I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples [Gentiles]; they [Israel’s former oppressors] shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; ²³ kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me [who do not give up praying and expecting]. (Isa. 49:22-23)

1. Jesus made an oath that He will set up a standard (banner) that the nations will recognize as a call to bring the Jewish survivors back to Israel (Isa. 11:12; Isa. 62:10). The leaders of the nations who attacked Israel will be killed and replaced by kings who will serve and honor her. This will include providing the means for her children to relocate to Israel.
2. This oath includes Jesus personally leading captives to Israel from Egypt and Assyria. He will command Gentile kings to serve Him in this (Isa. 11:11-16; 49:22-23; 60:3-4, 9). He will also send Jews from Israel to lead Jewish survivors back to the land (Isa. 66:19-21).
3. Jesus will mandate that the top leadership of the nations help in this cause. He will command Gentile kings to provide for Jewish survivors to get home to Israel (Isa. 11:11-16; 49:22-23; 60:3-4, 9). Gentile kings will personally bring some Jews to Israel.
4. Kings and queens will extravagantly care for and nourish Israel’s children who are in their nation. They shall “bow down,” as they are conscious of guilt and thus “lick the dust” under Israel’s feet. In other words, they will humble themselves before Israel as part of their humbling before God for personal and national restoration.
- E. In these decrees, Jesus’ sovereign power will be on display as well as His covenant-keeping faithfulness and tenderness to Israel in this great sudden reversal that begins with winning the Battle of Jerusalem, then giving international decrees to reverse the way the Jews are treated in all the nations. Israel’s restoration process will occur over many stages just as the global restoration process of other nations will. It will take years to complete the process.

- F. Nations will be responsible to obey Jesus in this issue of helping Jews return to Israel. This will be the top priority of all nations worldwide in the time immediately after the devastation of the Great Tribulation and Armageddon. The most natural thing would be to attend to national needs only. Think of the people of New Orleans after Katrina, how they were fully preoccupied with their recovery and survival. Yet, a Jewish king in Jerusalem will demand that they all participate in the recovery of the Jewish refugees.
- G. Isaiah describes the dramatic reversal of the attitude of the Gentile kings who have no option but to embrace God's purpose for Israel. Jesus' ultimatum produces meekness in the Gentile nations.
Your gates shall be open continually ... that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession.¹² For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined... (Isa. 60:11-12)
- H. Israel's condition just before Jesus' coming is as prey and captives of nations who are mighty and terrible and who contend with and oppress Israel (Isa. 49:24-26). Jesus will reverse this. Israel's children will come from all the nations in which they were held captive.
Shall the prey be taken from the mighty [Antichrist's system], or the captives of the righteous [awe-inspiring] be delivered?*²⁵ *Even the captives [of Israel] of the mighty [evil leaders] shall be taken away, and the prey [Israel] of the terrible [strong evil leaders] be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children [orphaned].*²⁶ *I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their blood ... All flesh [Gentiles] shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (Isa. 49:24-26)
1. God asks a rhetorical question (v. 24) and then makes a prophetic declaration (v. 25) that He will contend with those who contend with Israel.
 2. Since slave labor is free labor, it is seen as a valuable resource to evil nations. The mighty leaders of evil nations will not easily give up their slave labor. However, what is impossible for man is possible with God (Mk. 10:27). How will these nations be motivated to give up their captives? It is by the second coming of Jesus.
 3. Israel's children will come from all the nations in which they were held captive. This is a restatement of vv. 22-23. The word righteous (v. 24) is translated by some as "awe-inspiring" or "a captive of an awesome one." It is parallel to the next phrase translated "the terrible" (v. 25).

XI. JESUS WILL SET THE JEWISH CAPTIVES FREE IN EGYPT AND ASSYRIA

- A. Jesus will assemble the captives of the remnant of Israel. The primary two nations in which this happens are Egypt and ancient Assyria (regions of modern-day Jordan, Syria, and Iraq were previously called the Transjordan; Isa. 11:11, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Mic. 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11)

- B. A “highway” or road will be built up specifically for the return of the Jewish captives (Isa. 19:23; 35:8; 49:11; 62:10). The captives of Israel are called the outcasts and the dispersed ones (Isa. 11:11-16; 40:10-11; Hos. 11:10-11; Zech. 10:10).

It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time [the first time for 2,500 years was in 1948] to recover the remnant of His people who are LEFT, from Assyria [Jordan, Syria, Iraq] and Egypt, from Pathros [island of Pathros near Nile Valley in Egypt] and Cush [Ethiopia], from Elam [Persia] and Shinar [southern Iraq], from Hamath [Syria] and the islands of the sea [Mediterranean].¹² ***He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth ...***¹⁵ ***The LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt [Red Sea]; with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River [Euphrates at Assyria], and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry-shod.***¹⁶ ***There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be LEFT from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.*** (Isa. 11:11-16)

- C. Jesus brings Jewish captives back from Egypt and gathers them from Assyria.

I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them.¹¹ ***He shall pass through the sea with affliction [power against the sea], and strike the waves of the sea; all the depths of the River shall dry up [Rev. 16:12; Isa. 11:15]. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.*** (Zech. 10:10-11)

- D. Jesus will thresh from the Euphrates River in Assyria to Egypt as He gathers, one by one, the Jewish outcasts (prisoners) in Egypt and Assyria who were about to perish. He will do this when the great trumpet is blown. He will then lead them to Jerusalem that they might worship Him. This will parallel the time when God told Pharaoh to let His people go so that they might worship Him (Ex. 4:23; 7:16; 8:1).

In that day that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River [Euphrates River in Assyria] to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel.¹³ ***So it shall be in that day: the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.*** (Isa. 27:12-13)

- E. The captives of Israel will come back from Egypt and Assyria.

“They [Israel] shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He [Jesus] roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; ¹¹ They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,” says the LORD. (Hos. 11:10-11)

In that day they [Jewish exiles] shall come to you from Assyria and the fortified cities [literally the cities of Egypt], from the fortress to the River, from sea to sea ... ¹³ Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds. ¹⁴ Shepherd Your people with Your staff ... as in days of old. ¹⁵ As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them wonders. (Mic. 7:12-15)

They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria ... thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian [Antichrist], when he comes into our land... (Mic. 5:6)

- F. Jesus will use a strong hand (miracles) when He leads the captives to Jerusalem.

The Lord shall come with a strong hand ... ¹¹ He will feed His flock ... He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young. (Isa. 40:10-11)

- G. Jesus leads them out of the gate of the prison camps to Jerusalem. Jesus breaks open and then breaks out. This is the language of prison camps.

- H. Jesus will gather a large number of Jewish prisoners together as He marches them to Israel.

I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold ... they shall make a loud noise because of so many people. ¹³ The One who breaks open [Jesus] will come up before them; they [Jewish captives] will break out [prison camps], pass through the gate, and go out by it; their King [Jesus] will pass before them, [even] with the LORD [Jesus] at their head. (Mic. 2:12-13)

1. Jesus will gather a multitude of captive Jews like sheep in a pen. This promise of vv. 12-13 will be fulfilled in the context of Jesus' second coming (Mic. 4:1-8; 5:2-9; Ezek. 20:33-44; Zech. 9:9-10; Rev. 19:11-16). In this passage, Micah refers to Jesus in three ways, as the “One who breaks open,” “their King,” and “the LORD at their head.” The Rabbinic tradition interprets all three titles as referring to their coming Messiah.
2. First, Jesus is called “the One who breaks open” or “the Breaker,” who breaks open the doors of the prison camps so the Jewish captives can pass through the gate of the city in which they were held captive.
3. Second, Jesus is called their “King,” who will pass before them to lead them to Israel.
4. Third, Jesus is described as “the LORD,” who keeps His covenant with them.

- I. This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. However, some amillennialists see the passage as referring to the refugees who fled to Jerusalem because of the Assyrian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem's deliverance from King Sennacherib's siege (701 BC) or the restoration from Babylonian exile (538 BC) after the deportations of 597 and 586 BC. All attempts to explain this passage as being completely fulfilled in history are problematic.
- J. Micah declares the Lord is ultimately the One responsible for afflicting Israel at this time.

"In that day," says the LORD, "I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted" ⁷ ... the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever. (Mic. 4:6-7)

But this is a people [end-time Israel] robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers ... ²⁴ Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? (Isa. 42:22-24)

"I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. ²² So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward. ²³ The Gentiles shall know that Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies ... ²⁴ According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them. ²⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name— ²⁶ after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid. ²⁷ When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, ²⁸ then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer.'" (Ezek. 39:21-28)

- K. The Lord will give up Israel until the time when the nation as a whole returns to the Lord.

Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she [Israel] who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel. 4 And He [Jesus] shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God ... for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth ... ⁵ When the Assyrian [Antichrist] comes into our land, and when he treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him ... ⁶ thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he [Antichrist] comes into our land and when he treads within our borders. ⁷ Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples [nations] ... ⁸ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest. (Mic. 5:3-9)

L. The captives of Israel will return on horseback from the surrounding nations.

"Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD." (Isa. 66:20)

XII. PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY BY EZEKIEL

"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—²⁶ after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.²⁷ When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations,²⁸ then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer.²⁹ And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD." (Ezek. 39:25-29)

XIII. PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY BY ZEPHANIAH

"Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame.²⁰ At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes..." (Zeph. 3:17-20)

XIV. PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY BY JEREMIAH

"At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."² Thus says the LORD: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest ...⁴ Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel ...⁸ Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame ... a great throng shall return there.⁹ They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel ...¹¹ For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger [Antichrist] than he..."

¹⁵ Thus says the LORD: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.” ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD: “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears ... they shall come back from the land of the enemy.” ¹⁷ There is hope in your future, says the LORD, that your children shall come back to their own border. ²⁰ Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD. ²¹ Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, Turn back to these your cities. ²³ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity: ‘The LORD bless you, O home of justice, and mountain of holiness!’” (Jer. 31:1-23)

“‘For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’” ⁴ Now these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. ⁵ “For thus says the LORD: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.’ ⁶ Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? ⁷ Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, But he shall be saved out of it. ⁸ ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. ⁹ But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.’” (Jer. 30:3-9)

XV. PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY BY AMOS

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom [Antichrist kingdom in league with apostate Israel], and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” says the LORD. ⁹ “For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground. ¹⁰ All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.’” ¹¹ On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down ... ¹³ Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed ...” ¹⁴ I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. ¹⁵ I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God. (Amos 9:8-15)

- A. The sinful Antichrist kingdom will be based in Jerusalem. God will destroy it from the earth. Yet He will save a remnant of Israel.
- B. God will sift the nation of Israel when the tabernacle of David is in place. The tabernacle of David is the theocratic government of Jesus in the millennial kingdom that has a spirit of worship in its foundation.
- C. This is when God will bring back the captives of Israel from the waste cities.

Session 13: Jesus the Victorious King at Armageddon (Joel 3:1-2, 9-17)

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations... (Joel 3:1-2)

Proclaim this among the nations: “Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. ¹⁰ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” ¹¹ Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. ¹² “Let the nations be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.” ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. ¹⁶ The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. ¹⁷ “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.” (Joel 3: 9-17)

I. HUMAN HISTORY DOES NOT END WITH A NUCLEAR WAR

- A. The drama of human history does not come to a close with the superpowers of the nations blowing each other up in a massive explosion, as has been the popular Hollywood theme of our day. Scripture makes it clear that natural history ends with a battle, but this battle is not between the East and the West, it is not about Communism verses capitalism, or about any other human against human conflict. ***The two sides of this great battle will be evil human beings against God Himself***—and God will win. The Church will not be absent when this great struggle takes place; the Church will be here on the earth. Our anticipation will build as circumstances lead up to this battle. The knowledge of its approach will encourage us. In their fierce hatred, the Antichrist and his evil army will be desecrating the earth and persecuting Jewish people and Christians. As the circumstances leading up to the end-time battle intensify, believers will be crying out to God for His breakthrough in power to deliver His people and to judge the Antichrist’s empire who will be violently oppressing multitudes in many nations.
- B. The end-time events will come to a crescendo, with revival breaking forth, persecution mounting, oppression deepening, economics failing, food becoming scarce to the point of famine, food being supernaturally provided for believers in the earth, the judgments of God breaking forth upon the unbelievers, and the wrath of Satan breaking out against the Church.

- C. Jesus will stand in the sky as a fully human king who is fully God. No human king in history has ever stood in the sky. This day will mark an entirely new order of supernatural power—a Man will stand in the sky with His armies. The wicked people on the earth will look up and marvel, in a total quandary as to what to do about this supernatural set of events. In all of the might of the Antichrist’s evil army, they will have never confronted an army standing in the sky!
- D. What strikes us most about this scene is that it is literal! When Jesus splits the sky with His appearing and liberates the captives, it won’t be instantaneous, but a process! It will take time. Many assume He will do away with the natural human dimensions in the end-time events
- E. The battle of Armageddon, the great final battle around Jerusalem, will not be over in fifteen minutes. He will first appear in the sky. He will appear in the sky with all of His angels and then He will strike the evil nations in a progressive battle, causing the blood to flow far and wide. Isaiah described Jesus as the One coming up from Edom, traveling in the greatness of His strength, with garments stained red (Isa. 63:1-4). As this real, human King makes His way up from Edom, His garments will truly be red with the blood of His enemies. Though the supernatural activity of God will accelerate this battle, He will do it in context to natural human process.
- F. This concept of literal events in a natural realm is important for us to understand! This is not hard for the Jewish mindset. They see the kingdom of God as a literal, Jewish, earthly, political reign. This is why they were bewildered when Jesus didn’t conquer the Romans and vindicate the Jews at His first coming! They were looking for a political human government. And they were partly right! It is what they were promised all through the prophets. Their error was in limiting God’s kingdom to the natural and to their nation, for it is also *spiritual* and international—the covenant was given to Abraham to bless *all* nations (Gen. 12:3).
- G. Many Gentiles err on the other side in *only* understanding God’s kingdom as spiritual and international without seeing the literal, earthly millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem. We must learn to bring these two paradigms together because both are necessary to understand what is coming when Jesus returns and rules the nations!

The government will be upon His shoulder ... of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. (Isa. 9:6, 7).
- H. Jesus challenged the paradigms of His Jewish disciples when He said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth” (Acts. 1:8). The power they would receive would be supernatural, of the Holy Spirit, and not just the natural, physical strength of armies. The Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, and the resurrected Christ was sending them to these “defiled” Gentile neighbors! (Jn. 4:9). This was a stumbling block to their minds! He was also sending them to the uncharted territory of the ends of the earth. They believed the earth would come to *them* (which it will—Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1-2) more than they understood their responsibility to go to all the earth.

II. ALL NATIONS GATHERED FOR JUDGMENT

I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel... (Joel 3:2)

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:1- 2)

- A. The Lord will gather the armies of all the nations to one place. The “all nations” of this passage is not speaking of every single human being of every nation—it is not a gathering of the *whole population of the earth* to be destroyed at Armageddon. Zechariah 14:16 tells us that some of the nations will be left. Rather, the Lord is speaking about the *governments* of the earth—the military captains, leaders, and personnel representing of all the nations. Still, this will be no small number; millions will be gathered to Israel and the surrounding area of the Middle East. Some of these will come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, just outside of Jerusalem.

God will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:1, 2)

- B. At that time, Israel will have no military budget, no infrastructure, and no weapons of warfare. Israel will have fallen into the trap of the Antichrist, making a covenant of peace with him (Dan. 9:27). In the beginning of this peace treaty, they will dwell in safety, though it is a false peace (Ezek. 38-39). Yet when he turns on them, they will be defenseless.
- C. Jesus will set His feet upon the Mount of Olives! A multitude of Jewish people will be trapped up against a mountain and surrounded on all sides, and there will seemingly be no route of escape. When He sets His foot on the Mount of Olives, the mountain will split in two creating a new valley so that His people might escape from their persecutors. (Zech. 14:4-5).
- D. Satan will also work to gather the nations to Israel. He will send out his demons to work false miracles that cause the kings of the earth to be allured in the deception to unite against God.

I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Rev. 16:13-14)

- E. Both Jesus and the Antichrist will be at work in gathering the nations to Jerusalem. Yet God’s sovereignty always overrides the devil’s schemes. Throughout history, Satan continually plays the role of “God’s devil,” in that whatever he does, God brings about good from it (Rom. 8:28). In other words, Satan’s schemes continually fall into the greater purpose of God’s ultimate plan.

- F. Another factor that will bring the nations together in war against God will be their envy, bitterness, and greed—wanting to take the spoil from the land of Israel and steal the wealth of the Jewish people whom they wish to exterminate.

Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you.” (Ezek. 35:11)

- G. Summary: three things will work together to cause the great gathering of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Men will come under the compulsion of human greed. Hoping to conquer the earth, the devil will work miracles to draw the kings there. And Jesus, superseding the others, will be drawing these evil and wicked leaders in the Antichrist’s empire that He might deal with them and kill them all before the eyes of the whole earth. He will lure them into a divine trap and gather them together so that He might display His mighty power with such an impact that it will stay in the memory of the nations for the next thousand years.
- H. Nothing He will do will be unnecessary or too severe. He will use the least severe means to bring the greatest number of people to Him at the deepest level of love. The Lord will have given them every chance to repent. Yet these ungodly Antichrist nations will be in a wicked state of rage against Jesus and His people. In their rebellion their hearts will be utterly hardened, completely unresponsive to the grace of God. They will hate God with perfect hatred (Rev. 11:18). The Lord will stir them with an invitation, “Well, come then.”
- I. Only one aspect of God’s motive for calling the nations to war is made known here, it will be a time of retribution on the nations for scattering the people of Israel, with whom God made a covenant. God will fight for the covenant He made with Israel until the end—and He will prevail. It is a testimony of His mercy! He promises to remember His covenant with the ones who have rebelled *most* against Him throughout history. He is zealous for them (Zech. 2:8; 8:2).

III. THE ZEAL OF THE JEALOUS KING

- A. The battle of Armageddon, referred to here as a military conflict in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, is a subject covered thoroughly in the Word of God. The Lord has given us significant emphasis and detail in Scripture on this so that His people would be confident about the end of the story.
- B. Through this battle He will not only save unbelieving Israel and Gentiles; He will also vindicate and deliver all the believers. This battle portrays Jesus’ zeal and His commitment to His people. He will not sit back in passivity, but will take action and go to war on behalf of His own.
- C. It will be a real battle.

- D. What God does in that day will make an impact on how He governs the earth for the next 1,000 years. The people of the millennial nations will remember Jesus' great power, wisdom, zealous love, and unrelenting justice that were demonstrated in the Armageddon Campaign. They will know how serious He is about His government. Then all of the nations will know that He is God!
- E. These events will make a great social and emotional impact upon the earth when He kills untold millions in the Antichrist's empire, along with their wicked leaders.

The Lord ... shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. ⁶ He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. (Ps. 110:5-6)

He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares ... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isa. 2:4)

- F. The memory of this event will impact the social, emotional, legal, and economic decisions in the earth for the next 1,000 years (Rev. 20). The memory will live on and the power of it will affect generation after generation. They will tell their offspring and their descendants the story of this zealous King who killed the leaders in the Antichrist's empire!
- G. We need to get to know the Jesus who is portrayed in the Armageddon Campaign; slaying reprobate oppressors is not contrary to His personality of love and tenderness as He delivers those oppressed by Him. ***This is what Jesus' love is capable of.*** When we learn how far love goes to deliver the persecuted and oppressed, there is gratitude in our hearts.
- H. David described the safety of drawing close to the Lord in intimacy and awe in the end times.
Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Ps. 2:11-12)
- I. We must become deeply acquainted with both His burning love and His fierce zeal to remove everything that hinders love. We see these two manifestations of His heart throughout the Bible! What He did in becoming human and being crushed by the wrath of God on the cross is His ultimate statement of zealous love (Eph. 2:7).

IV. UNDERSTANDING THE ARMAGEDDON CAMPAIGN

- A. The Battle of Armageddon is typically understood as an isolated battle that occurs in Jerusalem just before Christ returns. In actuality, it is not an isolated battle—it is the final fight in a whole campaign of battles. It will be a military campaign lasting the entire last 3½ years before the second coming. Thus, this conflict in the Valley of Jehoshaphat when Jesus slays His enemies is the last of the series of battles in what is often termed the Armageddon Campaign.

- B. The Antichrist will conduct numerous battles around the world (Rev. 6:1-6), the greatest of which will be the 3½-year Armageddon Campaign, ending with the final battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat—the Battle of Jerusalem (Rev. 16:14, 16). During this campaign, the Antichrist, with his ten-nation confederation and with the support of the kings of the earth, will gather to Armageddon. The Antichrist's armies will have armed forces stationed in the northern plains of Esdraelon, or the Hill of Megiddo, as well as throughout the entire land of Israel, with troops deployed from the area of Armageddon. This great conflict will extend from the plains of the north, down through Jerusalem, out into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and southward to Edom.
- C. The term Armageddon appears only once in the entire Bible (Rev. 16:16). It is the place God chose to gather the nations for the war of the great Day of God Almighty. In Hebrew it is called, "Har-Magedon" and these two adjoined Hebrew words can be translated, "hill-country of Megiddo." Megiddo actually means "mountain of gathering" and comes from a Hebrew root word [Gaw-dahd] which means "an assembling of troops." Megiddo was an Old Testament city in northern Israel, sixty miles north of Jerusalem. It is located within a famous valley, a vast open plain that extends out toward the east, called the Valley of Jezreel. Today Megiddo is a fertile valley known as "Israel's breadbasket" because of its continual harvest. The Valley of Jezreel, where Megiddo is located, is approximately 15 miles wide at its widest point and 20 miles long.
- D. Megiddo itself served as a military stronghold where many strategic battles in Bible history were fought. There, Deborah defeated Sisera (Judg. 4-5), Gideon defeated the Midianites (Jug. 6), Saul died at the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam. 31), Joshua defeated the Canaanite king of Megiddo when entering the Promise Land (Joshua 12), and Josiah was killed by the Egyptians (2 Chr. 35:22-24; 2 Kgs. 23:29). This same valley will host the great Battle of Armageddon. Though the plain of Megiddo is too small to host millions of soldiers from the armies of the earth long-term, it is large enough to act as the gathering place to dispatch armies throughout the land.

V. THE GENTILE NATIONS PREPARE FOR WAR AGAINST GOD!

Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. ¹⁰ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" (Joel 3:9-10)

- A. God's answer to the nations' abuse and defilement of His land and His people is the cry, "Prepare for war!" This is the voice of the Holy Spirit stirring up the nations to fight. He cries, in effect, "Rally your strongest and best! Tell all of the soldiers to get out their uniforms and re-enlist! Let even the weak ones be emboldened in their pride." Once again, in this strange paradox, the nations of the earth will be summoned to war by God, Satan, and their own sin. Demons will be deceiving them and falsely prophesying, "Go to war and there will be great victory and spoil!" The Lord will be enlisting and calling, "Go to war!" And their own sin and lustful nature will compel them to this war. It is a mysterious thing when the forces of evil and the forces of righteousness move world history in the same direction, yet for different reasons.

- B. The Holy Spirit summons men to beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears. With this command, God will provoke pride in the human heart. The nations will convert their agricultural factories into military machines. This command is the opposite of what Isaiah prophesied would occur *after* the war is over: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:4).
- C. By summoning the nations to prepare for war, the Lord will stir them up in their arrogance. These wicked nations believe that they have power over God. Instead of crushing their pride, He will fuel it to let it come to fruition. He will hand them over to their own desires and bring them into the battle against Him that their wicked, false confidence has pressed for. Figuratively speaking, the Lord will get behind them and push them forward into the fullness of what their pride wants (2 Thes. 2:11). As this bolstered confidence swells, they will come by the droves, mesmerized under the spell of their conceit, and certain of a triumph over God that only fools would believe attainable.
- D. David described these proud armies of the Antichrist in the end times.
Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.” (Ps. 2:1–3)
- E. These kings will gather together and scheme: “We will destroy Jesus, the Anointed One, and His people! We will come against Him! We will cast off God’s cords of holiness! We do not want His Word or His ways! We do not want His restraints!” As they arise to this battle, their determination will be to kill all of the Christians and exterminate the Jewish race.

VI. LET THE NATIONS BE WAKENED

Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. ¹² “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.” (Joel 3: 11- 12)

- A. He convenes all the nations to this battle, not wanting one guilty nation to be absent (Joel 3:1). He calls to them, in essence, “Prepare for war! Come and dare to gather against Me! Try to wipe out My people and My land!”

- B. The Lord continues with the command, “Let the nations be wakened and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:12). With fearsome zeal, God will stir up the nations of the earth. He will not force them to come, yet He will create a setting in which the unholy boldness of their sinful hearts is aroused. He wants this arrogance to swell to its fullest and the sin that is within these nations to become ripe for judgment. He wants nothing kept in reservation or left dormant in that hour, but man’s wickedness will be brought fully into the Light. All of the wicked strength of these armies will not cause the Lord of Hosts to flinch. When the Lord summons the nations to fight against Him, untold millions will respond! Millions will gather to the nation of Israel and throughout the Middle East to crush Israel.
- C. In Psalm 45 the sons of Korah wrote about this final conflict of the evil end-time campaign, crying out to the Messiah, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh and ride in victory.” This Psalm portrays the glory and the terror of that day when Jesus goes forth as a great warrior king.
- Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty. ⁴ And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. ⁵ Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; the peoples fall under You. ⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. ⁷ You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions. (Ps. 45:3-7)***
- D. We cannot understand the Battle of Armageddon without knowing that the mighty One who makes war with His enemies is anointed with the oil of gladness more than any other man in history! The warrior king at Armageddon is motivated by glad love. Even as He endured the wrath of God on the cross for *the joy set before Him* (Heb. 12:2), so He will dispense His wrath on the wicked *for the joy* of an earth that is free of wickedness and a Bride that lives with Him in undefiled love. Oh, He is more beautiful than the sons of men! He loves righteousness, hates that which destroys love, and possesses a fiery zeal for truth! He is not only confident of His victory;
- E. Our warrior king loves truth and meekness. He does not ride in pompous strength but in truth. He uses this power for the sake of *meekness* and *truth*. He came as a meek Lamb and for 2,000 years has endured the restraint of His Father’s perfect timing. Jesus fights on behalf of truth, humility, and righteousness.
- F. Intercession is made for the release of angels in the Armageddon campaign.
- “Cause Your mighty ones [angels] to go down there, O Lord!” (Joel 3:11)***
1. Joel utters the prayer that will be offered in that time, that the Lord would send out His mighty angels to this great battlefield. It as though Joel, right in the middle of recording the word of the Lord, put his pen down and entered in with this prophetic prayer, “God send the angels! Break in!”
 2. Numerous other times throughout the book, Joel has lifted his own voice to God in prayer (Joel 1:19; 2:17). Here he prays for the angels of God to enter this immense drama!

VII. THERE THE LORD WILL SIT AND JUDGE

Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow-- for their wickedness is great. (Joel 3:12-13)

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸ that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Rev. 19:11-21)

- A. It will be in the final days of this age in history that the nations will respond to the summoning of God, the deception of Satan, and the pride of their own hearts to gather against God and Israel. In this area, the Lord will sit as Judge and He will condemn all the nations that surround Israel.
- B. Joel recorded the intercession of angels who cried out, "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe!"
Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great. (Joel 3:13)
- C. The apostle John also depicts this end-time scene:
I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. (Rev. 14:14-16)
- D. The angels cry out in intercession for Jesus to act against the evil that has fully matured on the earth! They are praying for Jesus to judge the Antichrist's empire.

- E. In the book of Revelation, an angel cries out, “Put in Your sickle.” John records this Battle of Armageddon, this treading of the winepress, in Revelation 19.
- Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”¹⁹ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Rev. 14:17-19)*
- F. Jesus will tread the winepress Himself with the fierceness and wrath of God (Rev. 19:12-15).
- G. The winepress is full and the vats are overflowing because the wickedness of the nations is great.
- H. Jesus will come to trample this wickedness. He uses the graphic metaphor of treading upon grapes to portray the blood of the nations that will flow far and wide! The winepress of sin will be full and because the nations overflow in *sin*, they will overflow in *blood* as God comes to judge them.
- Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel [Jesus], traveling in the greatness of His strength?— “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”² Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?³ “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments [in the context of the Battle of Armageddon], and I have stained all My robes.”⁴ For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me.⁶ I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth.” (Isa. 63:1-6)*
- Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two... (Zech. 14:3-4)*

VIII. THE VALLEY OF DECISION

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

- A. The valley of decision is not only a geographic valley, but it is the valley that the human heart lives in right now. Even now, people are moving in one direction or the other. Every person on the face of the earth is calculating their life vision, passions, strengths, and influence. They are anticipating their way ahead in life and moving either toward the Lamb of God or away from Him. And the pace is about to dramatically pick up.

- B. There will be no neutral ground in that day. The whole earth will be in this valley of decision. If people refuse the Antichrist, he will seek to kill them. Yet if they refuse Jesus, they will come God's judgment us (Rev. 14:6-13). No one will be able to claim neutrality.
- C. The secret compromises that we live in today will become easier and easier tomorrow. On the other hand, the secret abandonment to God that is costing us today will give rise to greater abandonment tomorrow.

IX. THE KING SHALL REIGN IN JUSTICE

The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.¹⁶ The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.¹⁷ “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens [foreign armies in military conflict] shall ever pass through her again.” (Joel 3:15-17)

- A. In that hour, this mighty Lion will become a shelter for His people! As He breaks through the clouds and sets His feet upon the Mount of Olives, He will protect those who are in danger. He will act as Deliverer and Savior to the captives being oppressed by the Antichrist.
- B. The Lord will not only use the sword in His mouth to execute His judgments, but He will exercise all of His resources in creation, including the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth itself. All of created order will obey the command of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity! He is the One who spoke creation into being, and now He will use it as part of His resources in judgment! As millions of soldiers are gathered together against Israel, loaded down with the most sophisticated weapons and military arsenal, the God of “Genesis 1” will present *His* weapons. He knows how to employ the sun and the moon for His own purposes!
- C. Suddenly, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will roar from Zion, from *literal* Jerusalem! (Joel 3:16). He will stand in the holy city and utter His voice with a deafening, earth-shattering roar!
- D. From His throne in Jerusalem, Jesus shall reign—He is fully God and fully Man. A *Man* will be King over all the earth, in time and space, and the Father will give Him the inheritance of the nations. “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—the Lord is one, and His name one” (Zech. 14:9). For a thousand years He will continue to transform every part of society. He will put an end to all authority and power that resists Him (1 Cor. 15:25).

X. CONCLUSION

What a gift God has given us in showing us the end of the story. So often in our short-sightedness we get weighed down with the cares of life. But the Lord is zealous for our hearts. Even now He is deeply involved in our lives, orchestrating our circumstances in order for us to enter into the fullness of His plans for us—plans that are so marvelous we can hardly fathom them (1 Cor. 2:9).

Session 14: Israel's Victory in the Millennial Kingdom (Joel 3:17-21)

You shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.¹⁸ And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Acacias.¹⁹ Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.²⁰ But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.²¹ “For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; for the LORD dwells in Zion.” (Joel 3:17-21)

I. ISRAEL'S INTIMACY WITH THE GOD WHO WILL LIVE AMONG THEM

You shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again. (Joel 3:17)

- A. In Joel 2:27, Joel quoted God's promise to Moses that Israel would know God. This was spoken to Moses in context to God delivering Israel from her oppressors by releasing ten plagues of judgment on the Egyptians. Joel is quoting this promise for the second time. God wants Israel to know His heart and to experience intimacy with Him as He delivers her in the end times.

I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Ex. 6:7)

- B. Jesus will literally live or dwell in Zion—Jerusalem—in the Millennium with the Israelites. Joel emphasized this again in Joel 3:21. This is the greatest privilege that God could give Israel. After the Armageddon campaign, Jesus will win Jerusalem back from the Antichrist and make it a city devoted to God's plan. Jesus will rule the earth from Zion during the Millennium.
- C. Jerusalem will be holy. This includes the city being filled with holy people as well as being seen as a holy or sacred place because it will be especially set apart for God's presence.
- D. No alien armies will ever pass through Jerusalem again in military conflict. Zechariah made this same point. This is not referring to Gentiles passing through Jerusalem as worshipers, which will be very common in the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-4; Zech. 14:16-18; Ps. 48:2-5).

In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD ... (Zech. 14:21)

- E. Gentiles will visit Jerusalem in the Millennium to worship, but without military conflict.

It shall be that whichever of the families of the earth [Gentiles] do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. (Zech 14:17)

The LORD's house shall be established ... and all nations shall flow to it.³ Many people shall come ... out of Zion shall go forth the law, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3)

II. ISRAEL'S FULL MILLENNIAL BLESSINGS

And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Acacias. (Joel 3:18)

- A. Joel saw supernatural prosperity in Isaiah's agriculture and livestock, as he did in Joel 2:21-27. This great blessing will occur because Jesus will personally live in the land. The mountains will have an exceptionally large grape harvest. Joel says they will drip with new wine. This means that the production of new wine will be abundant throughout Israel. Joel makes the same point when he says that the hills shall flow with milk. In other words, milk-producing animals such as cattle and sheep will multiply and feed on the luxuriant pastures in the hills of Israel. They will produce such unusually large quantities of milk that the hills are said to be flowing with milk.
- B. Amos also prophesied of the abundant grape harvest in the millennial kingdom.
"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When ... the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it." (Amos 9:13)
- C. The Millennium will be the time when there will be great abundance of wine and milk. This is when Israel will enjoy the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise that they would live in a land flowing with milk and honey.
Bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." (Deut 26:15)
- D. Joel prophesied that the brooks of Judah would be flooded with water (Joel 3:18). This will be a contrast to the brooks throughout Israel's history which have often been empty due to drought.
- E. In the Tribulation, the water supply will be diminished by drought and defiled by poison and blood (Rev. 8:7-9; 16:4) and the two witnesses can turn water to blood (Rev. 11:6).
These [two witnesses] have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy [3½ years]; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood... (Rev. 11:6)

The third angel sounded: and a great star ... fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹ ... and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. (Rev. 8:10-11)

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers ... and they became blood. (Rev. 16:4)
- F. There will be blood flowing throughout the land of Israel which will defile the agriculture.
Blood ... up to the horses' bridles, for 1,600 furlongs [184 miles across Israel]. (Rev. 14:20)
- G. Fire will damage the agriculture as it is thrown to the earth from heaven (Rev. 8:5), burns the trees (Rev. 8:7), and kills multitudes (Rev. 9:18). In Israel, the two witnesses will call fire on their enemies (Rev. 11:5-6). The sun will scorch men and agriculture with fire (Rev. 16:8; 7:16).

- H. Jesus will correct these problems in Israel's defiled water supply after He returns and heals the land. He will provide Israel with an abundant rainfall so that the brooks are described as flooded with fresh water. This will enrich the ground and cause the vegetation to be healed and blessed.
- I. Joel prophesied that a fountain of water would flow from the house of the Lord (the Jerusalem temple) that would water the Valley of Acacias (Joel 3:18). This water will cause the acacia trees to flourish. The Valley of Acacias probably refers to the acacia trees in the Kidron Valley.
- J. Zechariah prophesied that a river of "living water" would flow out from the temple to the Dead Sea. The "living water" speaks of water that is powerful enough to heal the defiled land from the effects of the fire, blood, and poisoned water supply that killed the agriculture.

In that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea [Dead Sea] and half of them toward the western sea [Mediterranean Sea]; in both summer and winter it shall occur. (Zech. 14:8)

There was water flowing, from under the threshold of the temple [in millennial Jerusalem] toward the east ...⁸ Then he [ange]) said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea [Dead Sea]. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.⁹ And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes ...¹² Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine." (Ezek. 47:1-12)

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.⁵ God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. (Ps 46:4-5)

III. GOD JUDGES ISRAEL'S PAST ENEMIES (EGYPT AND EDM)

Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land ...²¹ For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted... (Joel 3:19-21)

- A. Two of Israel's most fierce and long-term enemies are Egypt and Edom (modern-day Jordan). The agriculture of Egypt and Edom will become desolate and parched. According to Isaiah, parts of Egypt will be blessed by God (Isa. 19:20-25), yet according to Joel parts will be desolate.
- B. This judgment on Egypt and Edom will happen because they shed the innocent blood of Israelites throughout their history and will probably do it much more in the Great Tribulation.

- C. God will pay back the nations for bloodguilt, which speaks of taking the blood of innocent people by murder or war, etc. God will avenge the innocent blood of the Jews. In Joel's last prophetic utterance, he emphasized that God would not forget to pay back the unrepentant enemies of Israel. Jesus will see to this from His throne in nearby Jerusalem.
- D. The Egyptians and Edomites will become prototypes of God's judgment for the other nations that sinned against Israel. They will serve as a witness to all the nations in the Millennium that all nations must obey Jesus' government in Jerusalem.

If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zech 14:18)

IV. ISRAEL WILL BE BLESSED IN CONTRAST TO EGYPT AND EDOM

But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. ²¹ ... for the LORD dwells in Zion. (Joel 3:21)

- A. Israel's history is filled with God's judgment and military conflict. Joel assures them that they will survive history and prosper forever in God's favor. This will be a very important prophecy to proclaim to Israel in the Tribulation when Satan and the Antichrist will seek to annihilate Israel (Rev. 12). Judah's eternal existence as a blessed nation implies that they will always obey Jesus, thus, removing her reasons for being judged and annihilated like other nations will be. The final fulfillment of this promise is to be seen in the new earth (Rev. 21:1).
- B. Jesus living in Jerusalem (Zion) is the ultimate vindication and privilege for Israel.

Session 15: Overview of the Millennial Kingdom

I. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM: JESUS' 1,000-YEAR REIGN ON EARTH

- A. This session will give an overview of the Millennium which is a 1,000-year period in which Jesus will rule the world in righteousness. Millennium is from the Latin *mille* (a thousand).
- ⁴ *I saw thrones, and they [saints] sat on them ... They lived and reigned with Christ for 1000 years ...*⁶ *They shall reign with Him 1000 years.* (Rev. 20:4-6)
- B. At this time the kingdom of God will be openly manifest worldwide affecting every sphere of life (political, social, agricultural, economic, spiritual, educational, law enforcement, family, media, arts, technology, athletics, environment, social institutions, etc.). The result will be a 1,000-year period of unprecedented blessing for the whole earth as Jesus establishes righteousness and prosperity, and restores the agriculture, atmosphere, and animal life to some of the conditions that were seen in the garden of Eden (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 51:1-8; 60-62; 65:17-25; Ps. 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Deut. 8; 28; Mt. 5:5; 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 1:6; 3:21). This period of blessing will be initiated by Jesus' second coming.
- C. Jesus as King of kings will personally govern a worldwide kingdom from Jerusalem.
- ¹⁷ *Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem.* (Jer. 3:17)
- D. Jesus will rule in partnership with resurrected saints (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17).
- E. The millennial kingdom is one of the major revelations of Scripture. Jesus' core message was that God's kingdom was being released in a new measure on earth. The NT makes it clear the kingdom is already here (in a limited expression), but is not yet fully here until Jesus returns.
- ¹⁰ *Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* (Mt. 6:10)
- F. Daniel saw the heavenly coronation of Jesus as King over all dominions or spheres of society.
- ¹³ *One like the Son of Man [Jesus] ... came to the Ancient of Days [Father] ...*¹⁴ *To Him [Jesus] was given ... a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him ...*²⁷ *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve Him.* (Dan. 7:13-14, 27)
- G. Jesus quoted Daniel 7:27 concerning His rule over all the nations and dominions of the earth. In the Millennium, all the kings of the earth will be saved and worship Jesus (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 62:2; Rev. 21:24) and base their national governments on God's Word.
- ³¹ *When the Son of Man comes in His glory ... then He will sit on the Throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him...* (Mt. 25:31-32)

¹¹ *All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (Ps. 72:11)*

II. CENTERPIECE OF GOD’S PURPOSE: BRINGING HEAVEN AND EARTH TOGETHER

⁹ *Having made known to us the mystery [hidden plan] of His will ... ¹⁰ that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him. (Eph. 1:9-10)*

- A. The centerpiece of God’s eternal purpose is for Jesus to come back to establish His kingdom over all the earth as He joins the heavenly and earthly realms together. God’s purpose has always been for His people to live together with Him in this way forever. This is the interpretive key to understanding the end times. Without this foundational revelation, confusion is inevitable.

³ *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them... (Rev. 21:3)*

- B. God created the universe in two distinct realms. **Heaven** speaks of the spiritual realm where God’s power and presence is openly manifest. **Earth** speaks of the physical realm where human process, emotions, and physical sensation reach their fullest expression.
- C. Heaven is the place believers have gone for the last 2,000 years (from the cross to the second coming) as a “temporary holding place” before receiving a resurrected body. The saints do not need a resurrected body in heaven to relate to its spiritual environment.
- D. We see aspects of the natural and the supernatural dimensions operating together when Jesus appeared with His resurrected body to teach the apostles for forty days (Jn. 20-21; Acts 1:3).
- E. Ancient Greek philosophy (Platonism) viewed the spirit realm as good and the material realm as bad. This philosophy continues in the Church today. It leads some to think wrongly about heaven on earth. *If we do not think rightly of heaven on earth, we end up not thinking of heaven at all.*
- F. In the Millennium, Jesus’ primary mandate is to *prepare the earth for the Father’s coming* by bringing the nations to mature righteousness (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Righteousness will be substantial in the Millennium then perfect afterwards on the new earth. The earth will be purged with fire at the end of the Millennium to fully prepare it for the Father (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:11).

III. THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE ARE ON EARTH WHEN JESUS APPEARS IN THE SKY

- A. The redeemed will be raptured at the time of Jesus’ worldwide procession across the sky.
- B. The reprobate who took the mark of the Beast will be judged and then killed (some executed). At this time, there may be 1-3 billion of these people still alive. They will not just disappear.

- C. The **resisters** are the unsaved survivors of the Tribulation who refused to worship the Antichrist. These resisters will stand against evil governments without regard to having faith in God. Similarly, in World War II, the French Resistance fought the Nazis. Scripture refers to “those who are left.” They can be saved, then populate the millennial earth (Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 11:11; 49:6; 65:8; 66:19; Jer. 31:2; Ezek. 20:38-42; 36:36; Amos 9:9-10; Joel 2:32; Zech. 12:14; 13:8; 14:16).

IV. GET THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE MILLENNIUM

- A. Jesus will rule the earth with the natural human processes not suspended, yet significantly enhanced by the supernatural dimension of the Spirit.
- B. As Gentile believers, our most natural paradigm is to think of worshiping Jesus as God in the supernatural conditions of heaven. We emphasize Jesus’ deity as the Son of God. Whereas, the Jewish paradigm speaks of reigning with the Messianic King as a man in the natural conditions of the earth. They emphasize the Messiah’s humanity as the Son of David. ***The full truth is only seen when these two paradigms are brought together.***

V. HEAVENLY JERUSALEM AND EARTHLY JERUSALEM BROUGHT TOGETHER

- A. When the New Jerusalem comes to earth, then heaven is literally on earth. Heaven and earth come together as the New Jerusalem descends to the millennial Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the place where resurrected saints will live. The earth will continue forever (Ps. 37:29; 78:69; 104:5; 105:10-11; 125:1-2; 1 Chr. 23:25; 28:8; Isa. 60:21; Ezek. 37:25; Joel 3:20).
- ¹² ***The New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. (Rev. 3:12)***
- B. The New Jerusalem will descend and connect to earthly Jerusalem, creating a vast “governmental complex” (Ps. 48:1-5). It is referred to as Jesus’ throne of glory (Mt. 19:28; 25:31).
- ² ***The joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion ... the city of the great King ...*** ⁴ ***Kings assembled, they passed by ...*** ⁵ ***They saw it ... they marveled; they were troubled, they hastened away. (Ps. 48:2-5)***
- C. There are ***four reasons*** that we believe the New Jerusalem is close to millennial Jerusalem and accessible to it, yet without being on it. First, the ***dimensions*** of the New Jerusalem prohibit it from being physically on earth: millennial Jerusalem is about 10 square miles (Ezek. 48:30-35), whereas the New Jerusalem is 1,380 square miles (Rev. 21:16). However, Scripture shows that the people on earth are able to access the New Jerusalem. Second, the ***kings of the earth*** come into the New Jerusalem during the Millennium (Rev. 21:24-26). Third, the ***healing leaves*** in the New Jerusalem are for the millennial nations that need healing (Rev. 22:2). Fourth, ***angels guard*** the entrance to the New Jerusalem to keep sinners out as in Gen. 3:22-24 (Rev. 21:12). *Note:* Ten miles = 4,500 rods x 4,500 rods (a rod is approx. 10.5 feet; Ezek. 48:30-35; 45:6; 48:15-19).

VI. THE NATURAL PROCESSES OF LIFE WILL CONTINUE ON EARTH FOR 1,000 YEARS

- A. Jesus will rule the millennial earth that will have both natural and supernatural dimensions. The length of life will be restored to what it was in Noah's time. Those who live to be only 100 will be thought to have lived a short life. It will be common for people to live to be 500 years old.
- ²⁰ No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die 100 years old ... ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards ²² ... For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people ... ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox... (Isa. 65:20-25)*
- B. Animosity between animals with each other and with humans will be removed (Rom. 8:20-21).
- ⁶ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb ... the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole ... ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:6-9)*
- C. The natural processes of life will continue in establishing the infrastructure for every sphere of life in every city and village throughout the earth. This infrastructure will include replacing the governmental leaders from the Antichrist's worldwide government with new people at every level of public life in every city. This infrastructure will include life support systems (food, water, electricity), building projects (buildings, highways, bridges, etc.), economic systems (currencies, banking, investments, etc.), spiritual life (worship centers, Bible schools, etc.), education (from elementary to university levels), law enforcement; agriculture (equipment, distribution), media and arts, technology, environment, social institutions, etc.
- D. Jesus' government will progressively spread to all nations (Isa. 9:7). It will take 1,000 years for righteousness to progressively spread, mature, and be tested in every area of every nation.

VII. THE SAINTS WILL RULE WITH JESUS AS KINGS AND PRIESTS

- A. The two functions most emphasized for the saints are priests and kings (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).
- ¹⁰ Have made us kings and priests to our God ... we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:10)*
- B. As priests, resurrected saints will worship, intercede, and communicate the knowledge of God to others (non-resurrected people on the millennial earth plus the saints in the New Jerusalem). The primary government of the millennial earth will come forth from continual intercession.
- C. As kings, resurrected saints will evaluate the past, determine future action plans, and appoint people who serve in the infrastructure under their authority. This will include training and managing the people they appoint. Our personality will come forth in the decisions we make.
- ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? ... the world will be judged by you ... ³ Do you not know that we shall judge [evaluate] angels? (1 Cor. 6:2-3)*

- D. The saints will occupy the highest position of government in the Spirit on the millennial earth. This will be parallel to the relationship of angels in the government of the nations in this age. Saints in the Millennium will rule the angels who now serve them (1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 1:14).
- E. Governmental authority in the spirit is now carried out by angels who have charge over cities.
¹ Then He called out ... “Let those [angels] who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand.”² Suddenly six men [angels] came from the direction ... which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. (Ezek. 9:1-2)

VIII. JESUS WILL BE THE KING OVER ALL OTHER KINGS IN THE MILLENNIUM

¹⁶ He has ... a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:16)

- A. In the Millennium, all the kings of the earth will be saved, worship Jesus, and base their national governments on the Scripture (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 62:2; Rev. 21:24).
¹¹ Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (Ps. 72:11)
- B. Jesus will rule a worldwide kingdom in partnership with two types of kings: kings of the earth (non-resurrected bodies) and resurrected kings (saints with resurrected bodies). Together they will establish a godly social order that will transform every sphere of life in the Millennium.
⁵ Jesus Christ, the faithful witness ... ruler over the kings of the earth [non-resurrected bodies]. To Him who loved us ... ⁶ and made us [resurrected saints] kings and priests to God. (Rev. 1:5-6)
- C. Jesus reigns now at God’s right hand over the kings of the earth. Currently, His leadership over the kings of the earth is restrained. However, in the Millennium it will be fully manifest.
- D. Saints with resurrected bodies will be made kings and/or rulers over different spheres of life (Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17).
¹⁰ Have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:10)

IX. THE RESURRECTED SAINTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE KINGS OF THE EARTH

- A. Jesus will establish infrastructure in partnership with resurrected saints who will oversee those with non-resurrected bodies. The saints (resurrected) will have a dynamic role in training “resisters” (with non-resurrected bodies) who become born again after Jesus’ return to earth.
- B. The necessary infrastructure to govern each sphere of life will gradually increase in capacity, quality, and size as the leaders grow in wisdom and skill development.
⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isa. 9:7)

- C. The saints, as well as leaders with non-resurrected bodies, will need to learn and then apply what they learned. Jesus, with His saints, will be involved in training the non-resurrected leaders of the nations in God's ways. As wisdom is gained and applied, society will progressively improve. Together they will establish training institutions that all nations may systematically learn Jesus' ways (political, economic, spiritual, educational, agricultural, family, media, technology, etc.).
³ ***Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the House of the God of Jacob; He [Jesus] will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." Out of Zion shall go forth the law ... the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:3)***
- D. Those who reign with Jesus will be involved in this process of healing the millennial nations.
² ***Tree of life ... the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:2)***
- E. The resurrected saints in partnership with the kings of the earth will work together to fully restore the cities of the earth that are destroyed in the Tribulation. The saints will oversee what is rebuilt by labor (Isa. 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer. 31:5; Ezek. 48:18-19).
⁴ ***They shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. (Isa. 61:4)***

³⁶ ***Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. (Ezek. 36:36)***
- F. The resurrected saints in partnership with the leaders of earth will bring the gospel to those needing salvation. The lost will not be instantly and automatically converted at the moment of the second coming, neither will the children born in the Millennium. It will take time and effort to convert individuals and then to disciple nations.
¹⁸ ***I will gather all nations ... and they shall come and see My glory ¹⁹ ... Among them who escape I will send to the nations ... who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. ²⁰ Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations ... says the LORD. (Isa. 66:18-20)***
- G. The resurrected saints with the kings of the earth will work together to re-establish businesses to generate financial resources (Isa. 60:1-14). Israel will be prosperous in the Millennium (Isa. 4:1; 35:1-2; 30:23-25; 62:8-9; 60:1-14; 65:21-23).
- H. The saints will oversee the work necessary to restore God's order to the agriculture, atmosphere, and animal life (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 51:1-8; 60-62; 65:17-25; Ps. 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Deut. 8; 28; Mt. 5:5; 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 1:6; 3:21).
- I. The saints will oversee the work required to restore justice over all spheres of life (Isa. 9:7; 11:3-5; 10:22; 28:17; 32:16; 42:1-4). They will oversee the establishing of judges and governors (Jer. 30:21; Isa. 24:23, 32:1; Ezek. 45:8-9; Mt. 19:28; Lk. 19:12-27; 22:30). They will oversee the establishment of a world government under Jesus (Zech. 14:9; Ezek. 37:13-28, Rev. 19:16).
¹ ***A King [Jesus] will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice. (Isa. 32:1)***

⁸ ***My princes [in the Millennium] shall no more oppress My people... (Ezek. 45:8)***

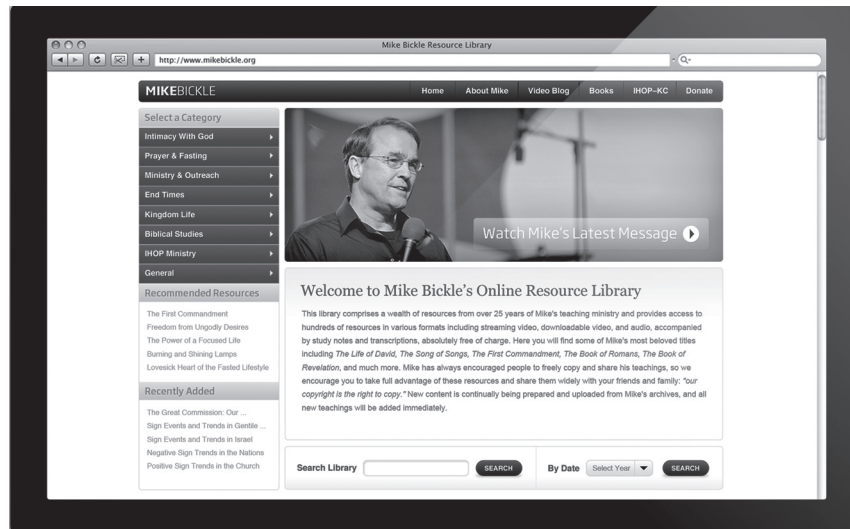
- J. In the millennial kingdom, sin will be committed by those with non-resurrected bodies and, therefore, sin will be punished. Sin and even false prophets will continue in the Millennium. They will be punished (Ps. 2:9, 72:9-11; Isa. 11:4; 66:20, 24; Zech. 13:2-4; 14:16-19).

³ ***It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother ... will say to him, “You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.” (Zech. 13:3)***

NEW!

MIKEBICKLE.org

FREE Resource Library



This library comprises a wealth of resources from over 25 years of Mike's teaching ministry and provides access to hundreds of resources in various formats, including streaming video, downloadable video, and audio, accompanied by study notes and transcriptions—absolutely free of charge. Here you will find some of Mike's most beloved titles, including *The Life of David*, *The Song of Songs*, *The First Commandment*, *The Book of Romans*, *The Book of Revelation*, and much more. Mike has always encouraged people to freely copy and share his teachings, so we encourage you to take full advantage of these resources and share them widely with your friends and family: "*Our copyright is the right to copy.*" New content is continually being prepared and expanded from Mike's archives, and all new teachings will be added immediately.

Subscribe to Mike Bickle's FREE video podcast.



internships

Encounter God. Do His Works. Change the World.

Each of our four internships are committed to praying for the release of the fullness of God's power and purpose as interns actively win the lost, heal the sick, feed the poor, and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our vision is to work in relationship with the larger Body of Christ to serve the Great Commission, as we seek to walk out the two great commandments to love God and people. Our desire is to see each intern build strong relationships and lifelong friendships.

INTRO TO IHOP-KC

A 3-month program for those joining IHOP-KC staff. This program offers classes about IHOP-KC's values, ministries, and structure, and gives practical skills for you to succeed long-term as an intercessory missionary. This program is designed for both families and singles.

ONE THING

A 6-month program for single young adults.

SIMEON COMPANY

A 3-month program for those 50 years and over, whether married or single.

FIRE IN THE NIGHT

A 3-month program for young adults between the ages of 18–30 who cry out to the Lord between the hours of midnight and 6:00am.

International House of Prayer University
3535 E. Red Bridge Road, Kansas City, MO 64137
816.763.0200 • internships@ihop.org • IHOP.org/internships



INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER

MISSIONS BASE OF KANSAS CITY

*Combining 24/7 Prayers for Justice
with 24/7 Works of Justice*

Since September 19, 1999, we have continued in night and day prayer with worship as the foundation of our ministry to win the lost, heal the sick, and make disciples as we labor alongside the larger Body of Christ to serve the Great Commission and to live as forerunners who prepare the way for the return of Jesus. By the grace of God, we are committed to combining 24/7 prayers for justice with 24/7 works for justice until the Lord returns. We are best equipped to reach out to others when our lives are rooted in prayer that focuses on intimacy with God and intercession for a breakthrough of the fullness of God's power and purpose for this generation.

For more information on our internships, conferences, university, live prayer room webcast, and more, please visit our website at IHOP.org.

International House of Prayer Missions Base
3535 E. Red Bridge Road, Kansas City, MO 64137
816.763.0200 • info@ihop.org • IHOP.org



IHOPU

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER UNIVERSITY

Encounter God. Do His Works. Change the World.

Forerunner School of Ministry

Forerunner Music Academy

Forerunner Media Institute

eSchool & Distance Learning

IHOPU's mandate is to equip and send out believers who love Jesus and others wholeheartedly, to preach the Word, heal the sick, serve the poor, plant churches and start houses of prayer, and proclaim the return of Jesus.

IHOPU stands in an environment of 24/7 prayer with worship and a thriving missions base. We are establishing a community built around the centrality of Scripture, prayer, and worship in a context where the Word of God is continuously expressed through teaching, singing, praying, and ministry to one another.

International House of Prayer University
3535 E. Red Bridge Road, Kansas City, MO 64137
816.763.0243 • ihopu@ihop.org • IHOP.org/university