

## The Joel 2 response

### 1. The book of Joel

- a. By studying the prophetic books of the Old Testament we can not only gain revelation on what is going to take place but also how God would have us respond. The book of Joel, though written to call Israel back from apostasy 2800 years ago is also 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.
- b. 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.
- d. An Overview of Joel's Message
  - Joel 1 – a natural disaster (agricultural crisis)
  - Joel 2:1-11 – a military crisis (Babylonian invasion of Israel as a type of the Antichrist's empire)
  - Joel 2:12-17 – the response that God requires in order to release protection and blessing
  - Joel 2:18-31 – the breakthrough of God's blessing (agriculturally, militarily, spiritually)
  - Joel 3 – God's punishment of His enemies (end-time Gentile nations attacking Israel)

### 2. Joel Prophesied just Prior to the Babylonian's Invasion (606-586 BC)

- a. 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). The same thing happened again in 70 AD when the Romans came against Jerusalem
- b. 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. The Antichrist's empire will arise and come against the nation of Israel in a way that will exceedingly surpass all other hours of tribulation.
- c. 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).
- d. The book of Joel has an application for the end-time agricultural, economic, and military crisis. 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.

### 3. Habakkuk and Zephaniah also Prophesied of the Babylonian Invasion

- a. Habakkuk and Zephaniah also prophesied in Israel around the time of Joel's generation. Each of these three small prophetic books, Joel, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, are similar in their language and message of God's judgment on rebellious Israel by Babylon. Each undertook their difficult assignment of warning a prosperous and religious nation that great trouble was coming soon. Few listened to them. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. We may be 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. The Lord often gives a prophetic warning several decades ahead of time to prepare the people.
- d. 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. 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.

## 4. The Day of the Lord

**Joel 2:11** *The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?*

- a. The Day of the Lord refers to the unusual events (positive and negative) that will escalate dramatically in the 3½ years just before Jesus returns. The 2-fold nature of this time is seen in the great blessing it releases on those who call on Jesus and the judgment for those who refuse Him.
- 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." These open demonstrations of His zeal are seen in both revival and the release of the judgments of God.

**Joel 2:11** *For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; Who can endure it?*

**Mal. 4:5** <sup>5</sup> *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*

- c. The twofold nature of the day of the Lord is that it is both **great** in power for the redeemed and **awesome (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 **awesomeness of judgment**. Isaiah calls it the year of favour and the day of God's vengeance

**Isaiah. 61:1-2** *.....the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God;*

- d. 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 as seen in the book of Acts and the book of Exodus will be combined and multiplied on a global scale. The “great” dimension of that Day will include the outpouring of the Spirit with extraordinary signs and wonders (Joel 2:28-32).
- e. To the rebellious it will be the most severe time of God’s judgments ever seen in history (Rev. 6-20). It will be a very terrible Day to the rebellious who will experience the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments in history in the Great Tribulation which occurs in the last 3½ years of this age

**Matt.24:21-22** <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup>And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. What we see in these two examples is meant to teach us the primary principles related to the end-time judgment and blessing.
  - i. **Positive** – the book of Exodus gives insight into the miracles that will be released when God delivers those who repents.
  - ii. **Negative** – the Babylonian invasion pictures the judgment on those who rebel.
- i. 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.
- j. The over-arching 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.**

## 5. The Coming Theological Crisis – Three Difficult Questions

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

**Matt. 11:6** *Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*

**Jer. 23:20** *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.*

- a. When God’s judgments increase in the land, a theological crisis emerges in the earth. There will be many questions that arise including three key 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. **If God is a God of love, why will He allow this?** 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,

**Hab. 1:13** "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?"

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?"

- c. 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** *My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.*

- d. **What can the righteous do to stop or minimize God's judgment?** What role are we the saints to play in this drama?

**Ezek. 22:30** *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.*

**2 Chr. 7:14** *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.*

- e. It has to do with our God-given role as intercessors as Joel describes in Joel 2:12-17. God calls us to stand in the gap and ask Him to remove, or at least minimise, His judgments.
- f. **What do the righteous say and do before and after God's judgments?** What do we say before and after these judgments occur? What do we call people to do?
- g. 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,

**Isa. 33:6** "Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times..."

- h. 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** <sup>3</sup> *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! <sup>4</sup>Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

- i. We can be filled with confidence in God's tender mercy when we understand His heart. 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.

## 6. Psalm 2 to Joel 2 to Acts 2

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

- i Psalm 2 is about a crisis that begins as a serious spiritual crisis and quickly escalates to a global crisis affecting every area of life.

*Psalm 2:1-3 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup>“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”*

- ii Joel 2 is about sounding the alarm and calling people to prayer and fasting in the face of such a growing crisis.
- iii Acts 2 is about the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit in response to God's people crying out, as described in Joel 2.

b. In each passage we see a dual fulfilment of the Scripture. All three passages have been fulfilled to an extent in the past, yet a complete fulfilment will come in the future. For example, we know that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost—this is how the church began. Yet before Christ returns, we know the Holy Spirit will also be poured out "on all flesh" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17) in such a way that the body of Christ will walk in unprecedented power while God releases "wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below" (Acts 2:19).

c. The timing of the fulfilment rests on God's people responding in a way described in Joel 2. Many believers love to quote from this key chapter in Scripture, particularly the verses that highlight the outpouring of the Spirit mentioned above. Yet Joel 2 provides more than just a hopeful message that has been partially fulfilled in the past and will be completely fulfilled in the future.

d. It gives us **God's blueprint for responding to the growing crisis today** so we can one day see such an outpouring. If we are experiencing the Psalm 2 crisis today (which we are) and desire an Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit (which we do), we would do well to look closely at God's guidelines for how the church is to respond, as described in Joel 2.

## 7. The Response that God Requires: Solemn Assemblies

*Joel 2:12-17 “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?*

*<sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup>gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. <sup>17</sup> Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”*

- 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. Crying out to Jesus in a solemn assembly is a practical thing to do before and during a crisis. Jesus will release His favour and protection in response to our wholeheartedness and intercession.
- c. His answer for today's crisis is the same as that which 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.
- d. 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. 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.
- e. 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 during the future time of the Antichrist's reign of terror.

## 8. Turn to God with Wholeheartedness

**Joel 2:12-13** *"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.*

- a. God wants our hearts and our love As He reveals His heart to us so He calls on us to 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?
- b. Turning to God in wholeheartedness involves repenting, fasting, and praying. The very existence of mankind is because God loves us and desires a deep relationship with us. The place of safety in the time of judgment is in the midst of a company of people living in long-term, corporate wholeheartedness.
- c. As we respond to Jesus' work on the cross with a response of wholeheartedness, we walk in God's favour in a time of judgment. To be in the midst of a people who are developing a corporate, long-term history in wholeheartedness is the safest place on the earth.
- d. Joel defined what turning to God looks like. Turning to God with all our hearts involves fasting, weeping, and mourning before the Lord. Joel 2:12-17 and Joel 1:13-14 exhort God's people to take action and change their lifestyles.
- e. **Rend your heart and not your garments.** 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.

- f. 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. 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.
- g. 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. 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.
- h. 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.

## 9. Repenting With Confidence in God's Tender Heart: A 5 Fold Revelation

**Joel 2:13-14** Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. <sup>14</sup>Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?

- a. Joel summoned 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. The grace of God puts His requirements within the reach of the weak (1 John. 5:4; Matt. 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 (Luke 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 realise that there is no one like Him!

**Micah 7:18** Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity ... because He delights in mercy.

- d. Third, the Lord is **slow to anger** and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God is not easily provoked with our weakness. He longs to forgive all who ask for it.

**Ezek. 33:11** 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."

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

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

- e. 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. The Lord is so kind that He will forgive and forget our sin if we will repent of it.

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

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

- a. 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. God desires to relent, or to cancel the decree of judgment, instead of issuing it.
- b. There are two stages in God's decrees:
  - i First, the decree is established in the heavenly court.
  - ii Second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute the judgment, or else the decree is cancelled.

**Zeph.2:1-3** *Gather yourselves together ...<sup>2</sup> before the decree is issued ... before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you ...<sup>3</sup> 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.*

- 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.
  - i First, God initiates what He wants by declaring it in His Word and stirring our hearts.
  - ii Second, we respond in obedience and prayer to God's initiative.
  - iii Third, God answers our responses by releasing more blessing that He would otherwise have withheld if He had not heard our cry.
- f. Our prayers matter, even when we do not feel their power. 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 favour



**2 Cor. 5:17-21** <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.<sup>18</sup> The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling<sup>19</sup> the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

## 10. The “perhaps” of God

**Joel 2:13-14** 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...?

**Zeph. 2:3** 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.

- a. There is “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. God desires to turn from judgment and leave a blessing. He prefers to transform a would-be disaster zone into a revival centre. 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.
- b. 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. 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.

## 11. Gather the People and Sanctify the Congregation

**Joel 2:15-16** <sup>15</sup>Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; <sup>16</sup>gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

- 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.
  - i **Blow the trumpet** in Zion to call a solemn assembly. We assemble the elders who will then gather the people to pray and fast. Blowing the trumpet means we should boldly proclaim the coming judgment and the solemn assembly.
  - ii **Consecrate a fast** – fasting positions our hearts to experience the grace of God in a greater way.
  - iii **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.
  - iv **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.
  - v **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. 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 prioritising 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.

## 12. Give Yourself to Earnest Prayer

**Joel 2:17** *17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"*

- 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.
  - i 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.
  - ii 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.
- 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!
- d. He delights in bringing glory to Jesus' name by answering the prayers of the saints, showing Himself to be active in their midst. 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.
- e. 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. 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 that He desires looks like. Joel 2:12-17 tells us exactly what we are to do to receive His mercy and deliverance.

## 13. 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 2:18** *Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.*

- b. 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.
- c. 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.

## 14. An Acts 2 outpouring of the Holy Spirit

- a. After telling us to blow the trumpet, consecrate a fast and call a sacred assembly the Lord paints this prophetic picture:

**Joel 2:28-29** *“And 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, and your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup>Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

- a. Acts 2 records what it was like during the first “instalment” of Joel’s prophesied outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What happened on the Day of Pentecost changed human history by igniting Spirit empowered believers to walk in supernatural power for the sake of expanding God’s kingdom on the earth. In the process people were healed, souls were saved and the gospel persevered in the face of harsh opposition. Even then, this “both-and” condition existed for the church; while believers faced horrible persecution still “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”.
- b. What is interesting is that the very first explanation of what happened on that day points directly to Joel 2. In the text Joel states *“and it shall come to pass afterward”*. At Pentecost Peter quoted a slightly different variation of this verse by replacing the word *“afterward”* with *“in the last days.”*

**Acts 2:17** *“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;*

- c. Peter was indicating that his generation was living in the last days and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit confirmed this. We are still waiting for the complete fulfilment of this prophecy when *“all flesh”* will be affected – an outpouring and revival greater than any others.
- d. Peter and the disciples had embraced the necessary conditions that Joel emphasised by obeying Jesus’ commandment to wait *in prayer*.

**Acts 1:4** *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father,*

**Acts 1:13-14** <sup>13</sup>*And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. <sup>14</sup>All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers*

- e. As was the case in Peter’s time, there is a conditional aspect to the greater outpouring of the end times and it centres on the single word that Peter replaced: *afterward*. The total fulfilment of Joel

2:28-32 will come *after* there has been a Joel 2:12-17 response of corporate prayer and waiting on God. Those in the upper room knew this and Peter confirms it when he addresses the crowd.

- f. God wants to pour out His Spirit in an even greater measure today as we face an increasing global crisis of Psalm 2 proportions. He has promised that this last day outpouring will affect all flesh. But He has called His people to turn to Him with fasting and with weeping and mourning (Joel 2:12). He wants us to rend our hearts and return to him (v.13). He has called us to blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast and call a solemn assembly (v.15)
- g. This is the Joel 2 response He is calling His Bride to, and *after* that happens – after we have responded in the way He has asked – then we will see an Acts 2 outpouring as promised. The Psalm 2 crisis requires a Joel 2 response, which then results in an Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit.

## 15. Conclusion

- a. 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.
- b. 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. God is waiting for our persistence in prayer before Him.
- c. 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.
  - i. **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.
  - ii. **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.
  - iii. **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.
- d. These three components together form corporate intercessory worship, which releases God's judgment and blessing, and prepares the way for the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in human history.