

THE GATHERING OF THE INLAND VALLEY

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

Establishing a Dynamic Spiritual Culture

²*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! POSITION YOURSELF TO HEAR

²*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 and message of Joel 1:1-2:9. Why does God want the message passed on? Because He desires His people to avoid judgment and to receive the fullness of His blessing. However, He knows that this will only happen as His people are in relationship based on agreement with Him.

B. The overall message of Joel for us today is that the glory of God is coming in unprecedented revival 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.

¹³*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 message of the book of Joel. In our context, it is the call to hear God’s heart and Word in understanding the coming glory and crisis. We need the Spirit to give us understanding so we can understand Joel’s message for today.

D. *To hear*: This includes leading a lifestyle that enables us to hear more clearly.

E. Jesus called the seven churches in Revelation to “hear.” He 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.

1. We must be careful with the information in the Scripture about the end times so that we do not explain it away or forget it. After we are initially stirred by the end-time message, we must continue to search it out until our hearts are gripped with understanding. 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).

2. God’s call to hear, to cultivate understanding, is essential because the message is offensive to our flesh; we naturally resist what challenges our comfort zone.

F. Hearing the end-time message as seen in the book of Joel does not come automatically. It requires that we deliberately cultivate understanding. Even the apostles had dull hearts of unbelief when speaking to Jesus after His resurrection (Mk. 16:14).

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¹⁴*He appeared to the eleven...and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. (Mk. 16:14)*

- G. The process of revelation begins with diligently studying scriptures like the book of Joel. We cannot settle for the initial stirring of our minds. What we learn must eventually become living understanding. The Lord told Ezekiel and John to “eat the scroll,” or fully digest the message He was giving them (Ezek. 3:1; Rev. 10:9). If we do not feed our spirits on the message, the initial inspiration many receive when they first hear the message can quickly diminish.
- H. The exhortation that Jesus repeated often in His earthly ministry was the call to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. This is written 16 times (8x in the gospels and 8x in Revelation; (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9).

⁷*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev. 2:7)*

1. First, recognize the signals. This phrase signaled that the truth being proclaimed was *extremely important to Jesus*.
2. Second, lean in and take a closer look. Jesus is saying that *there is more than* what is obvious. He is calling us to pursue the deeper truth being set before us (and not to be content to understand only what is on the surface).
3. Third, it will take the *supernatural help of the Holy Spirit* to grasp it. The unaided mind of even a devoted believer will not be able to automatically comprehend the truth being set forth. Jesus is making it clear it is beyond our natural ability. Jesus wants us to ask the Spirit for help.
4. Fourth, it takes *focused determination* to lay hold of the truths being referred to. We do not automatically respond in a deep and sustained way to them. It will take a tenacious commitment to maintain these truths in our lives long-term, because of our propensity to lose touch with or forget them.

II. BEWARE OF THE SCOFFING SPIRIT!

WHAT IS COMING IS BOTH UNPRECEDENTED AND UNFAMILIAR

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

- A. Joel begins his book 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?” Joel’s point is that because what is coming is unprecedented and unfamiliar, it is therefore not easy to hear.
- B. God’s glory and judgments will shake all the nations (Hag. 2:7). I believe we are entering a unique time in history. Its unfamiliarity makes being prepared for it difficult.

⁶*“I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land...⁷I will shake all nations...” (Hag. 2:6-7)*

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

³**Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and** ⁴**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 dismiss many things as simply too extreme. 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 judgment?" These scoffers will perpetuate the lie that everything will continue as it always has.

D. Many choose to simply ignore what is coming. They have what I call the "ostrich syndrome," putting their heads in the ground and hoping it will all just go away. What is written in the Word will not 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 outpouring of Gods' Spirit 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.

²**But a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.** (Gen. 2:6)

1. When Noah told people that water would come from the sky, they undoubtedly mocked him 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). Imagine, eighty years into building his boat—his friends must have said, "Noah, are you sure you heard right?"

⁷**By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...** (Heb. 11:7)

2. 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. 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.

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III. LEADERS MUST LEAD!

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO SOME LEVEL OF LEADERSHIP

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

- A. **Elders**: The call to hear begins with the leadership diligently seeking to understand the message of Joel. God is raising up leaders who will search out what the scriptures say about the generation that the Lord returns.
- B. **All the inhabitants**: When the elders hear and lead the people with fasting and prayer, then the inhabitants of the land will soon follow.
- C. One of the more important gifts that God gives a nation is to raise up young men and women in leadership with a spirit of revelation, and the grace of fasting and prayer.
- D. Notice the progression: the leaders first hear what the Spirit is saying, then the people earnestly give ear to it. The people do on a consistent basis what their leaders do on a consistent basis.

IV. TELL THE MESSAGE!

THE NEED TO PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE

³*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. It is possible that Jesus was making a reference to Joel 1:2 when He said, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

²³*"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."²⁴ 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."²⁵ 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

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

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

- 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 should hear “the message” so as to understand the primary events prophesied in the Scripture about Jesus’ return and the positive and negative events related to it. 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. We do not want our children to grow up confused or indifferent about the end times.
- C. A child’s heart is like wet cement that is moldable and teachable. They must receive what the Bible teaches as true and normal. One reason adults struggle for years with wrong paradigms of God is they were not taught them as a child.
- D. We want the pliable hearts of our children to be filled with biblical truth. As we do this, they will consider as true both the great glory and the great crisis coming to the earth.
- E. We must establish the right spiritual culture in the Church, a culture that is formed as we “tell” our children and they tell their children what Scripture says about the day of the Lord. When four generations understand this, the right spiritual environment filled with revelation of truth is established, and people consider it normal to believe and act in the ways the Word of God says.
- F. Establishing a dynamic spiritual culture according to the message of Joel will keep a scoffing and complacent spirit (2 Pet. 3:3-4) from taking root in our children.
- G. The spiritual culture of scoffing is seen in some of the Church today. Such people consider it “extreme” to believe what the Word of God says about the end times.
- H. We want to raise children in a spiritual culture where passion for Jesus, faith, obedience, and much prayer is seen as normal. 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.