

I. STANDING AT THE CRUCIAL JUNCTURE

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? (Joel 1:2)

- A. Last Sunday Daniel Lim set before us some shocking statistics concerning 21st century America and called IHOP to contend for historical revival.

Human ingenuity, ideas, ideology, philosophy, political activism, strategy and methodology fall short to turn a nation to back to God at a revolutionary force. We need an outpouring of the Spirit and we need a historical revival in America. We need a historical revival that will shift the fundamental DNA of the civilization in America in a revolutionary magnitude. If the statistic are accurately reflecting the spiral downward trend in the last 80 years, then no revival or renewal movement in the 20th century except the pre-1920s move of God has managed to turn this tide of “exodus” of worshippers. The moves of God in the 1940s, 1960-70s may have slowed it down.¹

1. The emerging prospect of post-Christian America
 - a. Builders generation (1924-1944) – 65% church engagement
 - b. Boomers generation (1945-1965) – 35% church engagement
 - c. Buster generation (1966-1983) – 15% church engagement
 - d. Bridger generation² (born after 1984) – 4% church engagement
2. Critical Missiological milestones:
 - a. 2% of population – the reality is probably here to stay.
 - b. 10% of population – the reality is probably capable of spontaneous reproduction
 - c. 16% of population – threshold of catalytic reproduction /multiplication /movement.
3. USA has the 5th largest population of population between 5 to 14 year-old after India, China, Indonesia and Nigeria.

¹ Daniel Lim, FCF Service 8-23-09.

² Thom S. Rainer

- B. My heart was personally connected to America’s need for revival in a renewed way during the 40 day 7-7-07 fast leading up to The Call Nashville. On the morning of the 33rd day I awoke from an encounter that has put intensity in my heart concerning the future of my sons and this next generation of Americans.
- C. Today we stand at a critical juncture. The prophet Jeremiah stated, “O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” My question today is twofold. Has IHOP-KC heard the sound of the trumpet and have we responded with a commensurate burden. Sept. 11th came and went. Katrina followed suit. Mike had the encounter of the angel holding the trumpet to his lips and an open vision of tanks driving across the land. A global financial crisis still exists. Yet, have we heard the sound of the trumpet. Has IHOP turned.
- D. America is way past the hour of having conferences on how to make our quiet times a little more bearable. Developing a history in God in this season is not simply a matter of making our quiet times more enjoyable. It is a matter of life and death. We need more than a few more tools to improve our devotional lives.
- E. An individual and corporate history in God must be cultivated that can bear the weight of rogue nations with nuclear capabilities, flu’s and pandemics, water shortages, biological threats, terrorist attacks, virtual perversion, the dullness of Western humanistic society, and the confrontation with the Holy.

II. JOEL’S CRISIS

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. 4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. (Joel 1:2-4)

- A. In the aftermath of a national disaster, Joel draws the nation into the urgency of the hour through an opening question, “Has anything like this happened in your day, or even in the days of your fathers?” Something monumental and shocking has taken place to all the living adults in the land. Before the rebuilding and replanting strategy kicks into gear, the prophet seizes the moment to ask the deeper question.
- B. A locust plague has swept through the land, and Israel finds herself in the peril of the aftermath. The chewing locust, swarming locust, crawling locust, and consuming locust have devastated the nation. Locust plagues do not always destroy an economy; however, Joel’s description of the plague paints a bleak picture. The crops are destroyed, the trees are stripped, and next year’s seed is in danger. Drought compounds the problem as fire spreads throughout the barren land, and the herds are dying of hunger and thirst.

- C. The land has experienced a financial catastrophe. The agricultural engine to their financial system is destroyed. In a short time the locust plague has brought the nation to financial collapse and the people to a crisis of survival. The prophet begs the question in verse 16, “Is not the food cut off before our eyes?”
- D. The prophet exhorts in Joel 1:5-13 every class of society to awaken and wail over the loss of the crops. The land must awaken and sober up. The crisis is just beginning. The front edge of the storm has passed over, but the back side of the hurricane will follow with greater severity. A religious crisis is upon the nation. The grain and drink offerings are cut off from the land. The Temple system is shaken. The priests are called upon to mourn and wail as the very core of their religious expression is stripped from them.
- E. The only appropriate response is to “lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.” Their response must equate the crisis. They must mourn as a virgin who has lost her husband suddenly before the consecration of the marriage can occur. This is an unthinkable tragedy. The crisis is urgent.
- F. In verse fourteen Joel gives the only answer to the crisis. The priests must move beyond their individual travail. They are instructed to consecrate a corporate gathering of prayer, fasting, and repentance. At the forefront of the relief and recovery effort must be a call to corporate repentance through gatherings of prayer and fasting. A corporate disaster calls for a corporate response. Shut everything down and bring the nation together for prayer and fasting.
- G. Why such an extreme measure? Why pull the entire nation together? The prophet gives the explanation in verse 14. It is the Lord who has done this! The Deuteronomic curses are operating in the land. The drought and locust plague have been sent from the hand of the Lord. Joel announces to the people that it is the Lord, who directs the wind and the plague, who has brought the destruction upon the people.
- Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)*
- H. When God’s judgments are evident among the people of God, what is the proper response? When the Day of the Lord is at hand how do the people of God respond? At the formation of the nation of Israel God set forth a clear path for returning to the Lord, which would turn His judgments into blessings. Moses instituted this path, Solomon solidified it, and the prophets, including Joel, called the people to it in seasons of compromise and judgment.
- I. The nation must respond in the way God has prescribed in Deut. 28-29 and 2 Chron. 7:14. Joel simply calls the people to return to the biblical prescription for crisis as set forth by the Lord to both Moses and Solomon. Their response is a matter of life or death, for the prophet will soon tell us in chapter two that another day of the Lord is coming. The locust plague is but the precursor. If the people do not respond to the locust plague, God will send a military invasion. The people of Joel’s day are at a crucial juncture between two crises. They must discern the season rightly and respond biblically.

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 Chron. 7:14)

III. THE CALL TO HEAR AND THE CALL TO AWAKE

- A. In many ways America finds herself much like the nation of Israel in the days of Joel. An economic shaking is upon us much similar to the prophet Joel in his day. Standing at a crucial juncture in between two crises, the word comes to him and he pleads with the children of Israel to hear and give ear to the word of the Lord. The people must hear the correct interpretation of the first crisis in order to respond correctly and avert the second crisis.
- B. Joel's prophecy begins with a charge for the leaders to hear. The mandate to hear always begins with spiritual leadership. The leaders must hear the words of Joel. Every generation's preachers will be held accountable for their generation. Oh, if we could have the testimony of Joshua, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord" (Joshua 24:31).
- C. Joel then calls the inhabitants of the land to give ear. This is a corporate summons. Elders and working class, adults and children are included in Joel's charge to listen. Joel is doing more than a call to physically hear his announcement. The prophet is calling the people to active engagement of God's interpretation of the prophetic moment. He is calling the people to discern the season and respond accordingly.
- D. Hearing takes place when the spiritual senses of the person are awakened to the truths contained in the prophecy. Suddenly, the content of the prophecy moves from the abstract to be pondered to the place of living understanding that demands a response. This is the reception of divine insight by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.
1. Is. 50:4-5 – Jesus is described in this servant song as having an awakened ear. The awakening enables Him to hear as one of the learned. The verse immediately connects the listening ear with right response. What you hear and how you hear will always display itself in behavior. Why? Rom. 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.
"The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned. 5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away. (Is. 50:4-5)
 2. Mark 4:24 points to the importance of what you 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. 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. 4:24-25)

3. Luke 8:18 points to the importance of how you hear. This speaks to the response required after hearing God’s Word. We must hear in such a way that cultivates a response of more inquiry and more obedience to what is revealed.

Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” (Luke 8:18)

4. Seven times in the gospels (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35) and once in Rev. 13:9 Jesus exhorts, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” Eight times in the Book of Revelation Jesus exhorts, “If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.”
- E. Joel reveals to us that there are narrow windows in history when the correct interpretation must be given in order to set the prayer culture to preserve the next generation from oncoming judgment and destruction. The prophetic voice calling Judah to hear exploded from 640-620 B.C. with Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.
- F. Many Bible students wonder at the lack of Joel’s mentioning of the king. However, the king is not at the forefront of Joel’s mind, and the king’s devotion is not enough to avert the judgment of God. King Josiah would show himself unusually devoted to Yahweh worship and work to reform the nation from their idolatrous worship. Yet, the king’s efforts were only able to delay God’s judgment. Joel is focused on establishing a corporate culture among the spiritual leadership and the people of the nation that will reveal a sincere repentance and true devotion.

IV. TELLING THE CHILDREN AND THE COMING MILITARY CRISIS

- A. After commanding the elders and inhabitants “to hear,” the prophet now commands them “to tell.” They must open their mouths and side with truth for the sake of their children. The prophet means more than reciting the facts of the locust plague. He is calling the people to interpret the facts in accordance with God’s promises in Deuteronomic Covenant. In humility they must agree with God’s assessment and teach their children the proper response. Why? Because, if they do not interpret the season rightly, instruct their children correctly, and respond biblically, a more devastating judgment is just around the corner.
- B. In Deut. 28:32-42 the Lord warned the children of Israel that if the, locust plague, which is a financial shaking, does not turn the people, then He would send a military conflict to shake the people out of their sinful state. The military conflict will cleanse the land of its bloodshed and exile the nation in a foreign land. The land would rest from its defilement, and the people would abandon their idolatry in another land.
- C. The prophet is urgently calling them to attention because another catastrophe is only a few decades away. If the elders do not interpret the season rightly and warn their children, the children will be the ones who reap the consequences of the military destruction. If elders do not heed the word of the Lord in Joel’s day, then the children will face Nebuchadnezzar in their day.

- D. The elders must discern the season rightly and transmit the correct prophetic interpretation to the next generation. Their children's lives depend upon it. The call of Joel comes as an urgent plea for the people to rightly reflect on the course of events and respond in the way which God requires. If they do not, their children will not have the proper interpretive framework to interpret the Day of the Lord that is coming. Their ears will be closed to the sound of the alarm. If the elders do not interpret Joel rightly for the children, Jeremiah will sound like another eccentric prophet out of touch with the goodness of God.

V. HINDRANCES TO DISCERNING THE HOUR OF CRISIS CORRECTLY

- A. **Many times we are tempted to bolster our personal comfort with biblical principles in the hour of crisis.** In the initial shakings of crisis we are tempted to ease our conscious and bolster our comfort with more favorable biblical principles. We must feed on the Word (including biblical principles) with an open heart so that we can hear the now word in the historic moment in which we live.
1. Biblical counsel differs depending on the historic situation. Isaiah's counsel concerning a foreign invader was vastly different from Jeremiah's counsel. Biblical principles must be matched with the proper prophetic interpretation.
 - a. Isaiah gives two prophecies concerning two different military invasions. In chapters 36-37 Isaiah addresses the Assyrian invasion with a promise of God's deliverance of Jerusalem. Israel was to seek refuge in Jerusalem. God would deliver the city, its Temple, and His people. In chapter 39 Isaiah addressing Hezekiah's hosting the Babylonian envoy announces that Babylon will invade the city and take its sons and the Temple treasury and articles.
 - b. In Jeremiah's day the false prophets used Is. 36-37 to bolster their position that God would protect the city and its Temple from the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah warned them of their false religion and vain hope. The prophet Jeremiah called them to embrace the correct prophetic interpretation and give themselves up to Nebuchadnezzar.
 2. Our religious traditions can often cloud our understanding. The Pharisees understood many biblical principles and taught on them, yet they were unable to recognize the signs of the times. The Pharisees had no room within their theological construct for a suffering and dying Messiah.

He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. (Mt. 16:2-3)

And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 But you do not have His word abiding in you,

because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (Jn. 5:37-40)

B. **Many times we confuse our individual intercessory desires with the corporate status of the Church before God.** God individual dealings with people may be very different than His corporate dealings with nations. Our Jabez prayer culture is so focused on individual prosperity that we are slow to recognize God's corporate dealings. If Jabez would have prayed his prayer during Judges 6, his borders would have been expanded inside of a mountain cave and his harvest would have been plundered by the Midianites. God's individual dealings in a given season may be very different from His corporate dealings.

1. Examples from the Civil War. Revival was taking place in both the Confederate and Union armies. God was displaying great mercy individually as thousands came to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. However, the nation would suffer the corporate judgment of losing over five hundred thousand men in a war required from the justice of God due to the enslavement of a people.

The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"³

2. Abraham receives blessings while Sodom and Gomorra receives judgment – Gen. 18
3. Moses receives favor from the Lord and sees His glory individually as Israel receives judgment for their worship of the golden calf in Ex. 32-34.

Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin -- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." 33 And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. 34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for

³ Taken from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.

punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin." 35 So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made. (Ex. 32:31-35)

So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name." 18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." 19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Ex. 33:17-19)

4. Manasseh as in individual is shown mercy because of humbling himself before God; yet corporate judgment upon Israel is not removed in 2 Chron. 33.
 - a. His Humbling and Restoration - 2 Chron. 33:10-16
 - b. Corporate Judgment because of Manasseh

I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem. (Jer. 15:4)

Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4 and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon. (2 Kgs. 24:3-4)

5. Josiah
6. Ezekiel gives us insight on the individual dealings of God in the midst of corporate judgment.

"Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. 14 Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. . . . 17 "Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through the land,' and I cut off man and beast from it, 18 even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered. 19 "Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, 20 even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness." (Ez. 14:13-20)

7. This lack of understanding robs us from carrying a corporate burden for the church.

- C. **We fail to discern due to the lull between the two crises.** We often mistake the temporary reprieve as a sign of God's approval, rather than a demonstration of His longsuffering.

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (Rom. 2:4-5)

- D. **We fail to discern due to a lack of understanding God's involvement in crisis.**

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hos. 4:6)

1. Humans will face many things, but one thing difficult to face is the present crisis and being able to discern its meaning in order to respond correctly. In fact, God is seldom seen as involved in the crisis, yet the testimony of Scripture is clear that God is involved in crisis. The Bible is filled with examples of the people of God confusing the season and trying anything else but humility, repentance, and turning to God in prayer.

2. Discussing God's role in times of crisis is not suitable to our modern sensibilities. In fact, it is quite offensive to the western mind to even hint that God may be involved in natural disaster and national crisis. In Luke 13:1-5 Jesus was asked concerning foreign military oppression and natural disasters. Jesus emphasized sober examination of one's standing before God and repentance is always the appropriate response to crisis. He also reiterated the future crisis coming to that generation in both temporal and eschatological judgment. If Israel does not repent, Titus will do to all of Israel in 70 A.D. what Pilate had done only on a small scale.

¹ There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5)

3. Joel is often called the prophet of the Day of the Lord. The book gives instruction on how God uses judgment to purify His people from sin and to deliver His people from their enemies. Many people do not understand this concept and are left unprepared for the release of God's judgments in their generation. The understanding of this concept is crucial for the generation in which the Lord returns. Without understanding the people of God are left in a position to be offended.

¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. (Matthew 24:10-13)

"And 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 the heavens will be shaken. (Lk. 21:25-26)

4. God Himself brings forth an evil empire to be His tool of chastisement to the redeemed and His tool of judgment to the unredeemed. God uses these pressures as instruments to kick out the props that allow both the Church and the unsaved to be dependent on wrong things. God is determined to help the Church be purified and grow in love, and He is determined to bring the lost into receiving His amazing love.
5. God orchestrates some military invasions to shake what can be shaken. One cannot read the Word of God and miss this idea. Some will concede that God “allows” but does not “cause” military invasions. The Scripture makes clear that on occasion, God sends them to release judgments on a nation.
6. The majority of the biblical prophets either prophesied of the coming day of the Lord in the Babylonian invasion or gave commentary on that past event in order to foretell of the greater eschatological Day of the Lord to come. The people of Joel’s day struggled to receive Joel’s interpretation of God’s leadership in causing the Babylonian invasion because of their sin. This message will also confront the people in the final generation as God temporarily brings forth a worldwide coalition of evil nations under the Antichrist to accomplish His purposes.
7. God in His lovingkindness uses evil leaders and military invasions to accomplish His purposes. One of God’s common methods, as seen through the Old Testament prophets, is to discipline His people and judge the wicked through a *divinely orchestrated military invasion*. God often raises up wicked men and evil nations as His instruments to purify His people and judge iniquity. Key Judgment Principle: ***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.
8. God’s paths are simple and within the reach of all persons. They are also not guesswork. The ways of God are not a mystery. He has set them forth for thousands of years. If God’s paths are simple and are clearly set forth, then why do so few people respond? They simply are not able to discern what season it is and what the proper response is.
9. Beloved there are over 100 chapters on the nature of the end times, revealing both the glorious and terrible nature of those days. We must not be ignorant.

See, I have told you beforehand. (Mt. 24:25)

- E. **We fail to discern the season correctly due to our lethargy and compromise.** God's judgments come to purify His people. We see sin more like dirt on a shirt than a lethal disease. Beloved, sin is like an aggressive cancer. God in His kindness removes our soul's other lovers.
- 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. 4:17)*
- "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk. 21:34-36)*
- F. **We fail to discern the season of crisis correctly due to our prayerlessness.** A praying person is a watchful person whose spirit is awake and whose ear is open to listen.
- Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt. 26:40-41)*
- Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming -- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning -- 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mk. 13:35-37)*
- But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. (1 Pet. 4:7)*

VI. THE WARNING OF JOSIAH'S REIGN

- A. Church history is filled with examples of revivals which precede a military crisis. America has many examples of revival preparing many young Americans for death in the Revolutionary, Civil, and World Wars. The revival prepares young persons for eternity but fail to make cultural and systemic change before the oncoming judgment. Thus, the judgment plays a crucial role in the systemic, cultural shift of the nation.
- B. Rarer are those revivals which take place in time to prevent the oncoming military crisis, where the transformation penetrates to such an extent that it turns the potential judgment of God into a season of blessing and protection. Hezekiah's revival is one such example. The Wesley revival is often said to have saved England from a bloody revolution such as the French experienced.
- C. Joel reveals to us that there are narrow windows in history when the correct interpretation must be given in order to set the prayer culture to preserve the next generation from oncoming judgment and destruction. The prophetic voice calling Judah to hear exploded from 640-620 B.C. with Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.
- D. Josiah's

1. 640-620 B.C. – Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah Announce the Day of the Lord
 2. 640 B.C. – Josiah’s Reign
 3. 632 B.C. – Josiah’s Seeks the God of his father David
 4. 628 B.C. – Josiah’s Purging of the High Places and Idolatry Begins
 5. 627 B.C. – Jeremiah the Prophet Prophecies Impending Military Judgment
 6. 622 B.C. – Josiah Discovers Restores Temple, Discovers the Law Books, and Restores True Worship.
 7. 622 B.C. – Josiah Repents and Seeks the Prophetic Word from Huldah the Prophetess
Then she answered them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, 24 'Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 25 because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.'" 26 But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard -- 27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD. (2 Chron. 34:23-27)
 8. 609 B.C. Josiah Dies and Idolatry Takes Root
 9. 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar Invades Judah and the Exile Begins
- E. The elders in Josiah’s day missed the prophetic window in which to change the culture to corporate prayer. Thus, Josiah’s individual efforts did not enable the reform to transform the larger body and avert the oncoming judgment. The window was missed, so that by the time Jeremiah came it was too late. The revival fizzled out days after Josiah’s death, and within three months the people under king Jehoiakim returned to idolatry. Within four years the Babylonians had begun their twenty year invasion process.

- F. The invitation to hear is critical. It is not a vague summons. It is the difference between responding correctly at a key juncture of history that can set a culture of corporate prayer to turn the crisis into blessing. We see this in Jesus' warning some 40 years before Titus' invasion. We also see the preparation of the Churches in Asia Minor receiving the same invitation some decades before a season of coming trial.
- G. Seven times in the gospels (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35) and once in Rev. 13:9 Jesus exhorts, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" Eight times in the Book of Revelation Jesus exhorts, "If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches."
- H. Joel gives an unusual glimmer of hope in 2:12-14. If we hear the correct prophetic interpretation of the hour, announce it, and turn to the Lord with all of our heart through establishing a culture of corporate prayer and fasting, the Lord in His great love and kindness may relent from send the calamity and leave a blessing. What we must realize is that the "perhaps" of God is directly related to our hearing at the crucial juncture of history. If we miss the urgent cry from God for us to hear and discern correctly, our culture of revival prayer will be missed and the perhaps of God will not be realized. Revival may come, but it will only prepare us for eternity. It will not avert the crisis.

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 -- A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? (Joel 2:13-14)

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, 2 Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you! 3 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. 2:1-3)

When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops. (Hab. 3:16)

- I. The sad reality is that Israel did not listen to the interpretation of her prophets. God sent them prophets morning by morning in His great compassion, but they would not hear. Jerusalem would also refuse Jesus' warnings and kill Him as well. However, God's word will not return void. It will accomplish all God's purposes. The locust plague came. Titus did as well. The prophet Joel will tell us another enemy of Israel shall come in the end times just as the Lord had spoken.

"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. 4 And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor

inclined your ear to hear. 5 They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. (Jer. 25:3-5 in 605 B.C.)

And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. 17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. (2 Chron. 36:15-17)

VII. CREATING A CULTURE OF DISCERNMENT – BLOWING JOEL'S TWO TRUMPETS

- A. If the elders do not hear and discern the season correctly, they fail to set a corporate culture of prayer as the main communal activity. However, the hardest thing for any generation to discern is their corporate standing before God. Everyone knows the famous saying, "The only thing that we've learned from history is that we've learned nothing from history."
- B. Jesus stated in Matthew 11:19, "**Wisdom is justified by her children.**" The wisdom of the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus could not be recognized in the present-tense moment. Also, the foolishness of the masses in their rejection of Jesus could not be discerned either. The successive generations would clearly see the fruit of Jesus life as well as the destruction of the religious establishment brought upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- C. Many things that look foolish to the masses today will be deemed as wise tomorrow, and many of the fads within the church right now will be deemed foolish tomorrow. Jesus addresses this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He emphatically declares that storms are coming. There is a great shaking coming that will reveal the quality of our labors. The man who built his house on the sand will be revealed as foolish, and the man who built his house on the rock will be revealed as wise on that day.

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Mt. 7:24-27)
- D. The Book of Joel contains three crises. The prophet prophecies in the day of the locust plague. The day of the Lord is upon the nation. In chapter two the prophet introduces Israel to a future day of the Lord. A military crisis is just around the corner. Chapter three introduces Israel to the eschatological crisis which will lead to Israel's final deliverance and restoration.

- E. In the heart of the prophecy chapter two introduces the audience to two very distinct trumpets. These trumpets give the blueprint for turning the judgment of the Lord into deliverance and blessing. Trumpets served two purposes in the Old Testament – to warn and to gather. One is a trumpet to warn. The other is a trumpet to gather.
- F. Joel 2:1 first announces, “Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the Day of the Lord is at hand.” The nation must hear the proper prophetic interpretation of the moment. The first trumpet is one of warning. The prophet proclaims, “Blow a trumpet! Sound an alarm!” When a watchman saw an enemy on the horizon, he was to blow the trumpet in order to warn the city to prepare for war. If the watchman failed to stay alert and did not sound the alarm, the city would surely be destroyed because of the watchman’s lack of alertness.
- G. The prophet commands the watchman to sound an alarm. Danger is on the horizon. The locust plague is only the precursor. The nation is set for a military invasion, and it is the Lord who is directing the army.
- H. Presently, God wants to sound the alarm. He desires to bring forth Day of the Lord preachers who will cause the Church to tremble and who will give the people understanding of God’s heart in the midst of judgment. Jeremiah stated that in the last days we would understand God’s judgments perfectly. This will come because persons will stand in the counsel of the Lord, hearing, perceiving, and marking His word.
- ¹⁸ For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it? ¹⁹ Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD has gone forth in fury – A violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. 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. (Jeremiah 23:18-20)**
- I. These persons will discern the season and give biblical understanding to God’s people for the purpose of turning them to the Lord in sincerity and truth. Daniel describes these preachers.
- ³² Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. ³³ And those of the people who understand shall instruct many... (Daniel 11:32-33)***
- Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)***
- J. Joel declares that the first trumpet must be sounded. The Day of the Lord must be preached unto trembling. Without the preaching of the current prophetic season and the Day of the Lord, trembling will not be produced in the people. The declaration of the urgency of the hour is necessary and vital for the Church to lay down Church as business as usual and gather for prayer and fasting corporately. Preaching is to create alarm in God’s people and cause them to tremble before His Word.

K. Without urgency the stadium may be filled for a day, but the heart is not rent and a culture of prayer is not formed. Without urgency the elders do not lay down their agenda for bigger and better in order to support continual solemn assemblies. Without urgency the elders and people do not reallocate their resources to prayer.

L. Urgency also changes the prayer focus. Joel 2:17 reveals the content of the intercession that should be offered in these gatherings. Without the revelation of the Day of the Lord, the intercession will not be, “Spare your people, O Lord.” Rather, our cry in the gathering will be, “Make our ministries bigger, O God.”

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)

VIII. APPLICATION

A. We must discern the season rightly.

B. We must not draw back from proclaiming the Day of the Lord.

C. We must blow the second trumpet of Joel and give God no rest in revival prayer until the crisis is turned into blessing.

D. We need a Holy Spirit burden for revival.