

# ***SOUND THE TRUMPET: STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOEL***

– GARY WIENS

## ***SESSION 5: THE VALUE AND CERTAINTY OF GOD’S END-TIME JUDGMENTS***

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*Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, Joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O LORD, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures. (Joel 1:15-20)*

### **I. ALAS . . . THE DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME!**

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

- A. In Joel 1, the prophet gave an account of the three dimensions of natural disaster that had come upon Israel: the locust invasion (Joel 1:4), drought (Joel 1:17-20) and raging fires that followed the drought (Joel 1:19-20). All of Israel’s life resources were being threatened by this progressive crisis, and things were not looking better—the devastations were not letting up.
- B. God sent Joel into the midst of the confused people to bring understanding as to why the crisis was growing and not subsiding. After describing the great national crisis—the absence of wine and oil, the ruined grain, the withered land, the despondency of the people—Joel proclaims a horrifying thing; He tells the people that God was the Author of the desolations (Joel 1:15).
  - 1. He goes on to tell them the calamity will get worse (Joel 2:1-9) because the Lord wanted His people to turn to Him. The crisis would surely continue and even increase *until* God’s desired effect took place.
  - 2. They need not look to natural solutions because the hand of God was behind the disaster. God was the One orchestrating it. His purpose in releasing judgment is to remove everything that hindered love in the life of His people.
- C. “Alas” – Joel was crying out “Woe!” to the inhabitants of the land. We can feel the pain of Joel’s heart in this word. There is a sense of shock and terror in Joel’s heart because he understands what is happening. He wanted this extreme situation to be understood so they would respond in the way that would minimize the danger.
- D. The parallel statement to “Alas” is, “Sound the alarm” (Joel 2:1). He wanted to summon the full attention of the people that they might heed the word of the Lord. Destruction was coming, and in mercy God had sent him to sound the alarm. Rising up against the current of his day and even the natural desires of the people of God, Joel cried out “Alas!”

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- E. He disrupted everyone's comfort zone by prophesying that he could see on the horizon a crisis so alarming that the majority could not even relate to it. They hardly had the ability to interpret the implications of what was happening in front of their eyes in the locust plague. They had just assumed this disaster would quickly pass. Yet Joel cries out, in essence, "No! It is going to get way worse! The locust plague turned into a drought! Then raging fires came! Our land is destroyed, yet the worst is not over! It's only going to escalate!"
- F. God uses invading nations to punish national sin when it comes to fullness. He used Israel to accomplish this in the Exodus event, and in the Word to Joel, God is warning Israel of a coming invasion to bring correction to their land.

***Genesis 15:16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.***

***Daniel 8:23-25 "And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes. (24) His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. (25) "Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without human means.***

## **II. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND**

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

- A. For the day of the Lord is at hand..." (Joel 1:15). We cannot overstate the shock that this statement would have been to the people of Joel's day. In the midst of the crisis, Joel boldly interprets the crisis as coming from the hand of God. Joel tells the people that the locust plague, the drought, the raging fires, the famine, and the starvation were all a part of the day of the Lord. God was behind all of this, and more was coming.
- B. This is the same as telling Israel that the God of Israel orchestrated the Holocaust (Deut. 28). This only makes sense in the light of the Father's strategy with His own Son.

***Acts 4:24-28 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, (25) who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'WHY DID THE NATIONS RAGE, AND THE PEOPLE PLOT VAIN THINGS? (26) THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' (27) "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.***

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1. The Father permitted His own Son to become the sin-bearer, carrying the guilt of all humanity in His own flesh.
2. Therefore, the full wrath of God and the full rage of Satan was poured out upon Him, the Day of the Lord judgments coming upon Jesus as He stood in the place of sinful mankind.
3. Those who take refuge in Jesus will never taste of the wrath of God. However, the rage of Satan will come against them, even as it did against Jesus.

***Matthew 10:24-25 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. (25) It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!"***

***John 15:20-21 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (21) But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.***

- C. The day of the Lord is when God fights against His enemies. In this case, sin within Israel was the enemy that God was fighting. His enemy, in one word, is unrighteousness. It is sin and Satan and all of the works of evil spread throughout the universe. The problem was that Israel was on the side of sin, making themselves an enemy of God.
- D. Joel described this day as destruction coming from the Almighty.
1. “Almighty,” or “Shaddai,” was understood by Israel as the covenant name for God. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Joel was setting up a powerful contrast by using this specific name of God. He defined the destruction as coming from El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God. In other words, the One who makes covenant with them is the One removing things that hinder love. He is the God who destroys the things that stand in the way.
  2. Israel always thought of El Shaddai as the God who provided for them according to their agenda but Joel was prophesying something different. He informed them that El-Shaddai was the One providing the answer to their greater dilemma—that which was keeping them from His heart. As their covenant God, His answer was in fact judgment.
- E. The Lord spoke this same message through Isaiah when He said, “I make peace and create calamity” (Is. 45:7), and through the prophet Amos, “If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?” (Amos 3:6).

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- F. What a disturbing statement! Thus far, Joel's message was mildly received as he stated the obvious, voicing the severity that everyone knew to be true. Yet in attributing the locust calamity to God's sovereign hand, he invaded Israel's comfort zones and stirred up the offenses of the people. I imagine them saying, "Wait a second, Joel. Now you have gone too far."
- G. Israel was troubled at this interpretation of the current events. They felt abandoned by God. God's zeal in judgment, is proof of His commitment to His people: His discipline reveals His jealousy over them. When God disciplines His sons, it is proof that He loves them (Heb. 12:5-12). It is God's proof that He will not allow things to go unchecked and unmeasured. He will intervene to correct the situation.
- H. This message will be equally offensive to our generation, even when it is declared by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We must be prepared for great resistance in this.
- I. I am not interested in simply giving a history lesson about the days of Joel. I am interested in equipping us with understanding of what is before us. This same scenario that Joel walked out will be repeated again in our land and in our day.

## **III. DEUTERONOMY 28 — BLESSING OR DESTRUCTION**

- A. God desires to release blessing to His people. That truly is His desire. Yet He refuses to pour out this blessing until His people live in agreement with Him.
  - 1. Deuteronomy 28 gives us great insight into Joel 1-3. The Body of Christ usually only studies the first fourteen verses, which speak of God's covenant blessings. Oh, how we love the blessing of God. We were made for it. Yet we cannot dismiss the other fifty-four verses beyond the first fourteen. The remaining part of the chapter is just as much an expression of the heart of God as the first part is.
  - 2. The Lord, in essence, says, "If you do not want My presence, then I will give you the only alternative: I will take away the hedge of protection, and I will let the destruction that is due you come upon you. If any of you refuse My mercy, justice is what you will get." God honors the free will of His people. If they do not want free mercy, they will receive justice without mercy. In other words, they get what they deserve. There is not a third option if we refuse repentance with mercy.
- B. The process of judgment which Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 is parallel with what was happening in Joel 1 and what will happen in our day.

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1. Moses says, ***“And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron” (Deut. 28:23)***. God prophesies a bronzed heaven, which in the natural, means the withholding of rain. I’m sure there is also a spiritual application of the Lord not hearing their prayers, but in the most immediate application, it is talking about literal drought.
  2. He goes on, ***“The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed” (Deut. 28:24)***. In other words, the Lord prophesies that He will send the scorching heat of drought and all of the lifelessness that it brings with His very own hand.
- C. ***“You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it” (Deut. 28:38)***. Scripture prophesies that God would send locusts. Amos foretold a locust plague in his day: ***“The Lord showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop...” (Amos 7:1)***. Amos prophesied that God was supernaturally intervening in nature to form the locust swarm and send it to the people of Israel. Talk about an unpopular statement!
- D. ***“You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them” (Deut. 28:39)***.
- E. Moses makes a most startling statement about God’s judgments; to be a prophetic sign for His people.  
***They shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder...on your descendants forever. (Deut. 28:46)***
1. Speaking of these curses that would be upon the people of Israel, he declares, ***“that the judgments shall be to them as a prophetic sign.”***
  2. This astounding verse is as true today as it was then. The situation of judgment is intended by God to be a sign and a wonder to mankind. It is devised to alert the hearts of men to the supernatural work of God—a miracle, though a negative miracle.
- F. The book of Revelation describes the supernatural work of God in releasing disaster and informing the planet that He is God. Much of Revelation is a prophecy of supernatural events from God’s hand that create disaster. They are intended to be as a sign and wonder, or in other words, a disaster with a prophetic message in it. The disasters prophesied in Revelation are more than natural calamities taking place; they are specific activities of God’s hand, given for the purpose of communicating a prophetic message.  
***Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth. (Ps. 46:8)***

God caused the crisis in Amos' day to be a sign in that He caused it to rain on one city and held back the rain from another city so that it would clearly be evident that a supernatural work was in play. He sent "cleanness of teeth" – a euphemism for famine – to get their attention (Amos 4:6). He caused "pockets of mercy" by sending rain on those places that were seeking Him and withholding rain from those that were not. To one city, the rain was a sign of supernatural blessing. To the other city, it was a sign of supernatural judgment (Amos 4:7). The people from two or three cities wandered to other cities to find water to drink, yet they were not satisfied. And still, in this crisis sent by God, they did not understand what God was doing, and they did not return to the Lord! (Amos 4:8) They blamed it on the Devil or on the natural cycles of weather. They missed the Divine message. They missed the sign and the wonder.

#### **IV. MOSES PROPHESED THE PROGRESSION OF JUDGMENT – LOCUST THEN INVASION**

***Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you...until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God... They shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever.. The LORD will bring a nation (Babylon) against you from afar...as swift as the eagle flies... a nation of fierce countenance... they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed.. They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls...come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you. You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters...in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. (Deut. 28:42, 46, 49-53)***

- A. This was a very well known prophesy in Joel's day. Joel follows the progression of this judgment which was to be understood as a prophetic sign to Israel.
- B. A locust plague (Deut. 28:38, 42) is to be followed by a military invasion (Deut. 28:47-57). Babylon was the only nation that destroyed all the fortified walls throughout all Israel. Babylon did this over a 20 year period (BC 606-586) which included 3 major invasions occurring in BC 606, 587 and 586. Just over a century earlier, Assyria besieged and defeated various Israelite cities, but could not take Jerusalem and others.
- C. Moses' prophesy in Deut. 28:52 was only partially fulfilled by Babylon. It will again be fulfilled by the Antichrist in the End-Times (Zech. 12-14).

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