



MAKING SENSE OF
THE GLOBAL CRISIS
AND **HOW THEN**
SHALL WE LIVE





In light of the COVID-19 crisis that is affecting many nations around the world, it is crucial for God's people to correctly interpret what is happening and to understand what the Lord wants from His people in this time.

The world has entered a new normal. However, are we as God's people hearing Him correctly and responding rightly to Him? Or are we simply waiting for this to blow over so that we can go back to our lives business-as-usual?

God's everlasting Word provides the answer as to what we need to do in such a time as this. It gives us the grid through which we can make sense of this global crisis, and the answers to the question, "How then shall we live?"

In this day and hour, we invite you to join us for corporate Joel 2 sacred assemblies of seeking God in prayer. Check out our meeting schedule at bit.ly/prayerroomschedule. Our sessions are open to the public.

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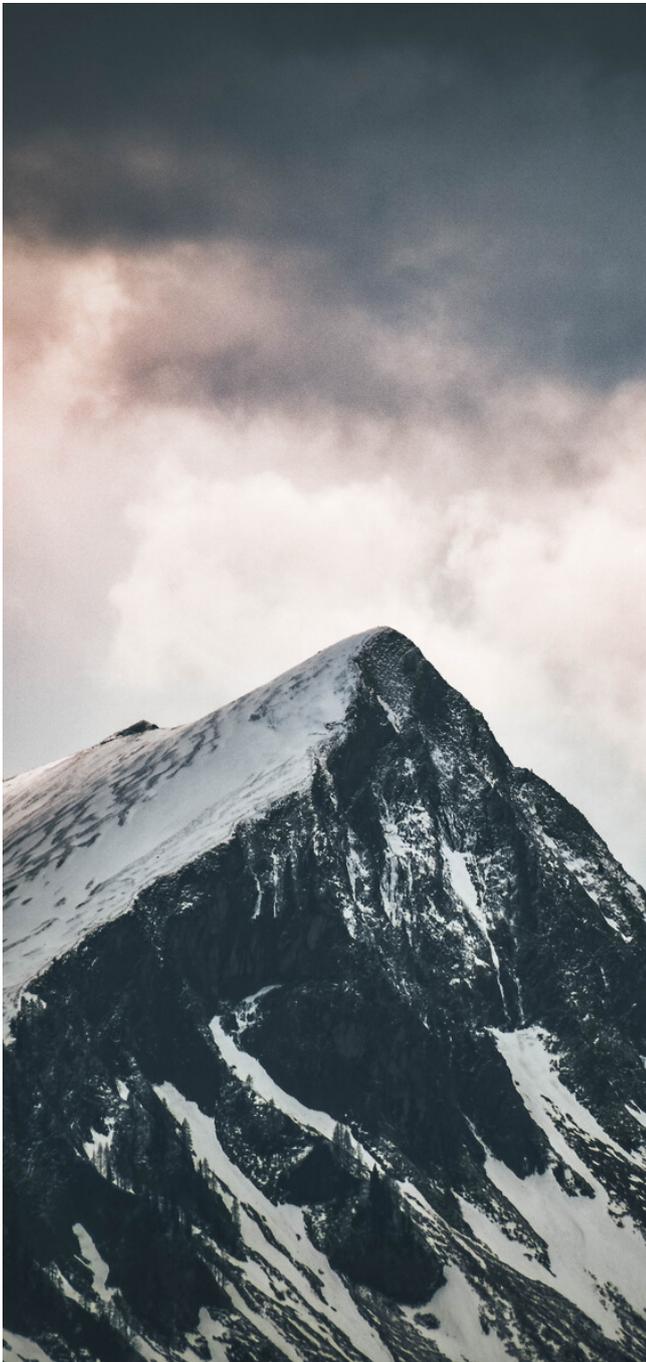
**WE ARE LIVING IN SERIOUS
TIMES. WE ARE LIVING IN
UNPRECEDENTED TIMES.
TODAY WE STAND AT A
CRITICAL JUNCTURE OF
HUMAN HISTORY!**

The September 11th terrorist attacks came and went in 2001. SARS came and went in 2003. The Asian tsunami came and went in December 2004. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina followed suit. Without much of a respite, the world then plunged into a global financial crisis in 2007 lasting two years, followed by the H1N1 flu pandemic close on its heels. Between September 28 to October 4, 2009, there were unprecedented natural disasters and calamities that took place within a week – a typhoon swept through Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan; a tsunami inundated the Samoan Islands; and two earthquakes rocked Indonesia. Today, we are facing an outbreak of still-unknown proportions of a new coronavirus (COVID-19) and the world is on the brink of another financial crisis!

Are these just mere coincidences? What is really happening and what should we make of all these events? Are these judgments of God? What does the Bible say?

As people of God, we must only draw our answers and conclusions from the very Word of God!

There are many questions that need to be answered, but the questions that I will seek to answer here are twofold – *“Have we understood the times and known what to do like the sons of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32? Have we heard the sound of the trumpet and responded with a commensurate burden like what Joel 2:1 and Joel 2:15 call for?”*



The Church is way past the hour of having conferences on how to make our walk with God better and how to become more effective in ministry.

Developing a REAL, DEEP and AUTHENTIC history in and with God in this season is instead THE matter of utmost importance!

**IN THE COMING CRISES,
IT WILL BE A MATTER
OF LIFE AND DEATH!**

An individual and corporate history in God that can bear the weight of the global crisis that is about to come must be cultivated, even as we witness rogue nations with nuclear capabilities, outbreaks of flu pandemics, water shortages, biological threats, terrorist attacks, virtual perversion, the dullness of humanistic society and the coming judgment of the LORD bearing down upon the world at this time.

In fact, Jesus emphasized in Matthew 24:6, Mark 13:7 and Luke 21:9 that **ALL THESE THINGS MUST COME TO PASS!**

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? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. 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)

In the aftermath of a national disaster, Joel attempts to draw the nation into the urgency of the hour through his opening question, *"Has anything like this happened in your day, or even in the days of your fathers?"* Before any rebuilding and replanting strategy kicked in, the prophet wanted to seize the moment to ask this deeper question.

Something monumental and shocking had taken place that affected all who lived in the land. **Did Israel even realize?**

Locust plagues had swept through, and Israel found herself in the peril of the aftermath. The chewing locusts, swarming locusts, crawling locusts, and consuming locusts had devastated the nation. While locust plagues do not always destroy an economy, Joel's description of the plague showed that this was otherwise for Israel. The crops were destroyed, the trees were stripped, and the following year's seed was in danger. Drought compounded the problem as fire spread throughout the barren land, and their herds were dying of hunger and thirst.

The land was experiencing a financial catastrophe. The agricultural engine to their financial system had been destroyed. In a short time, the locust plagues had brought Israel to financial collapse and the people to a crisis of survival: *"Is not the food cut off before our eyes?"* (Joel 1:16)

Temple worship was not spared. The priests could not perform their religious duties before the Lord as grain and drink offerings were cut off from the land.

HOWEVER, THE CRISIS WAS ONLY JUST BEGINNING.

The front edge of the storm had passed, but the rear of the hurricane would follow with greater severity. **Another impending crisis was upon the nation**, this time in the form of the Babylonian army's invasion (Joel 2:2-11).



JOEL'S CALL TO RESPOND

How should Israel have responded? The prophet exhorted in Joel 1:5 – 13 for every class of society in Israel to awaken and wail over the aftermath of the locust plagues. **The entire nation had to awaken and sober up.**

The only appropriate response was to *“lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.”* Their response must equate the severity of the crisis. They must mourn like a virgin who has just lost her husband suddenly before the consummation of the marriage could occur. This was an unthinkable tragedy.



THE CRISIS WAS URGENT!

In Joel 1:14, Joel gave the only answer to the crisis. The priests must move beyond their individual travail. Joel instructed them to consecrate a corporate gathering of prayer, fasting, and repentance. At the forefront of the relief and recovery effort had to be corporate repentance through gatherings of prayer and fasting. **A corporate disaster called for a corporate response.**

Joel's call to Israel was: shut everything down and bring the nation together for prayer and fasting.

WHY SUCH EXTREME MEASURES?

The prophet gave the explanation in Joel 1:15 - it is the Lord who has done this! *"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty."*

The Deuteronomic curses were operating in the land. The drought and locust plagues had been sent from the hand of the Lord. Joel announced to the people that it was the Lord who directed the wind and the plague, and who brought this destruction upon the nation.

When God's judgments are evident among the people of God, what is our proper response? When the Day of the Lord is at hand, how should the people of God respond?

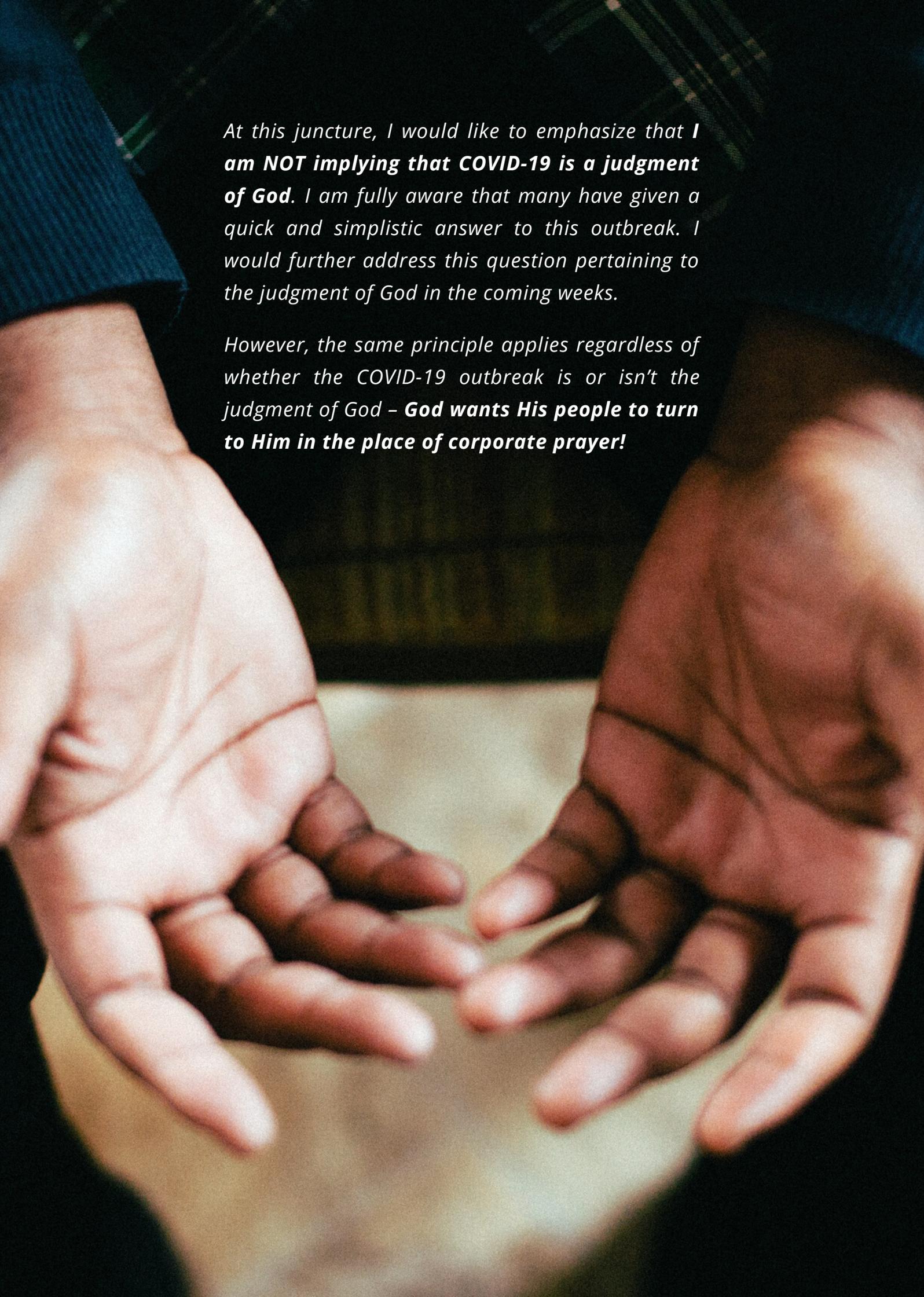
When God delivered and formed the nation of Israel, **He set forth a clear path for returning to Himself, which would turn His judgments into blessings.**

Moses instituted this path, Solomon solidified it, and the prophets, including Joel, called the people to it in seasons of compromise and judgment.

The nation must respond in the way God had prescribed in Deuteronomy 28 - 29 and 2 Chronicles 7:14. Joel simply called the people to return to the biblical prescription for crisis as set forth by the Lord to both Moses and Solomon.

Their response would be a matter of life and death, for the prophet would soon proclaim in Joel 2 of another Day of the Lord that was coming. The locust plagues were but the precursor. If the people did not respond to the locust plagues, God would send a military invasion. **The people of Joel's day were at a crucial juncture between two crises. They needed to discern the season rightly and respond biblically.**

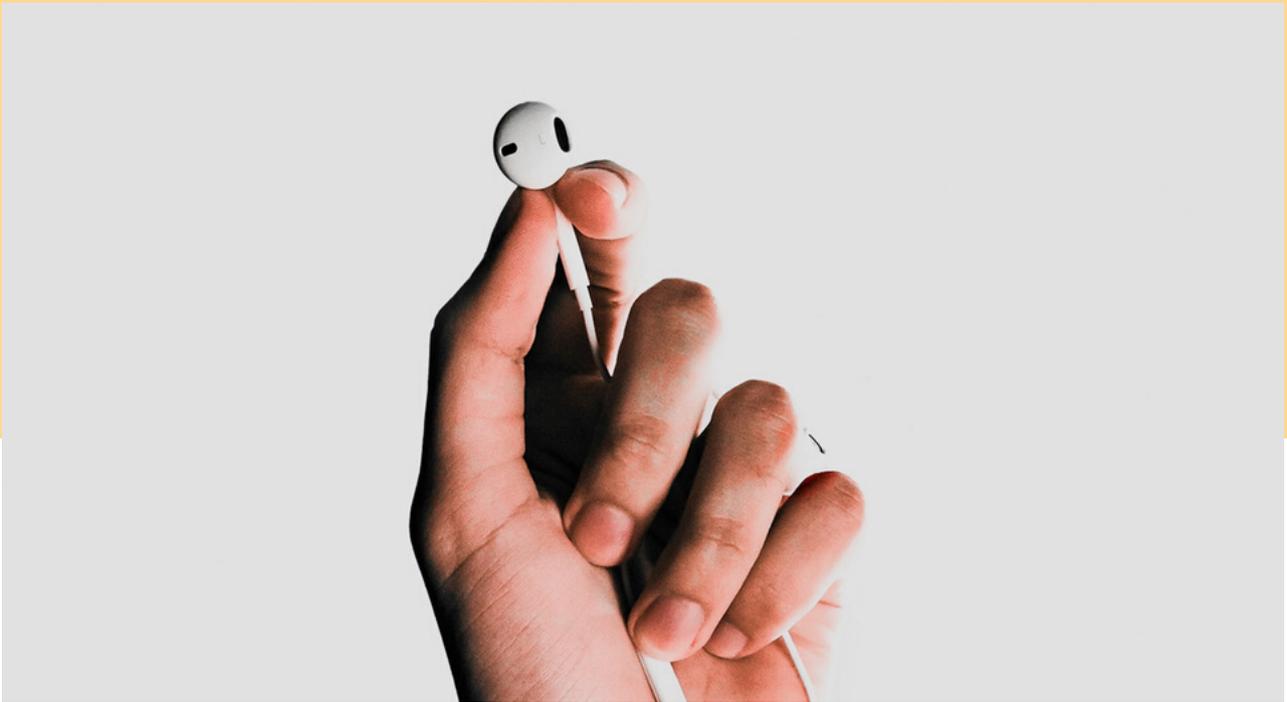




*At this juncture, I would like to emphasize that I **am NOT implying that COVID-19 is a judgment of God.** I am fully aware that many have given a quick and simplistic answer to this outbreak. I would further address this question pertaining to the judgment of God in the coming weeks.*

*However, the same principle applies regardless of whether the COVID-19 outbreak is or isn't the judgment of God - **God wants His people to turn to Him in the place of corporate prayer!***

THE CALL TO HEAR AND UNDERSTAND



In many ways, the world is finding itself in a similar situation as the nation of Israel was in the days of Joel. An economic shaking is upon us, just like it was in Joel's day. Standing at this critical juncture between two crises, the word came to him and he pleaded with the children of Israel to hear and give ear to the word of the Lord. **The people had to correctly interpret the first crisis in order to respond correctly and avert the second.**

It is the same for us today.

Joel's prophecy began with a charge for the leaders to hear. **The mandate to hear always begins with spiritual leadership.** Leaders must hear the words of Joel (Joel 1:2a).

Joel then called the inhabitants of the land to give ear. This is a corporate summons. Elders, the working class, adults, and children are included in Joel's charge to listen (Joel 1:2b - 3).

Joel was doing more than calling Israel to physically hear his announcement. The prophet was calling God's people to **actively engage God's interpretation of the prophetic moment.** He was calling God's people to discern the season and respond accordingly. The same applies for us today.

The Book of Joel reveals to us that there are windows in history when **correct interpretations must be given in order to set a prayer culture in place that will preserve the next generation from oncoming judgment and destruction.** From 640 – 620 B.C., there was an explosion of God’s prophetic voices calling Judah to hear through the prophets Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

Many Bible students wonder at the lack of Joel’s mentioning of Israel’s king. However, the king was not at the forefront of Joel’s mind because the king’s devotion was 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 the impending crisis.

Joel was instead focused on establishing a corporate culture of prayer among the spiritual leadership and people of Israel that would reveal sincere repentance and a true devotion to God.



IF ANYONE HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR



The elders in Josiah's day missed the prophetic window to change the national culture to one of corporate prayer. Thus, Josiah's individual efforts did not transform the nation-at-large to completely avert the oncoming crisis. The window was missed and by the time prophet 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 began their twenty-year invasion of Israel.

The ability to hear is critical! The invitation to hear is not a vague summons. **Hearing rightly will make the difference between responding correctly or incorrectly at key junctures of history.** Responding correctly will in turn make the difference between being overwhelmed by crisis or **turning the crisis into blessing.**

We see this in Jesus' warning to Israel some 40 years before Emperor Titus' invasion and in God's preparation of the Churches in Asia Minor some decades before a season of coming trial: *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

(Jesus' warnings to Israel are recorded in Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35, and His warnings to the Churches in Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22.)

Consequently, Joel gives an unusual glimmer of hope in Joel 2:12 – 14.

If we hear the correct prophetic interpretation of the hour, announce it, and turn to the Lord with all of our hearts through establishing a culture of corporate prayer and fasting, the Lord in His great love and kindness may relent from sending the calamity and leave a blessing behind instead.

What we must realize is that the *“perhaps of God”* is directly related to our hearing – and hearing correctly – at the crucial junctures of history.

If we miss the urgent cry from God for us to hear and discern correctly, the opportunity to establish a culture of prayer will be missed and the *“perhaps of God”* will not be realized.



The sad reality is that Israel did not listen to the interpretation of her prophets. God sent her 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 does not return void. It will accomplish all of His purposes. The Babylonian army came. And so did Emperor Titus.

**MAY WE NOT BE
HARD OF HEARING
AND LISTEN TO
WHAT GOD IS
SAYING TO US
TODAY!**





CREATING A CULTURE OF DISCERNMENT

Besides hearing correctly, we also need discernment to know how to respond. If the elders do not hear and discern the season correctly, they will fail to set a corporate culture of prayer in place as the main activity when God's people gather. 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."

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 their time. Also, the foolishness of the masses in their rejection of Jesus could not be discerned then either. Only 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.

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 addressed this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He emphatically declared that storms would be coming. Indeed, for those who are alive today, there is a great shaking coming that will reveal the quality of our labors. The man who has built his house on the sand will be revealed as foolish, and the man who has built his house on the rock will be revealed as wise on that day (Matt. 7:24 – 27).

WE NEED TO TAKE HEED TODAY FROM GOD'S VERY WORD AND LEARN HOW TO DISCERN THE SEASON AND OUR APPROPRIATE RESPONSE!



BLOWING JOEL'S TRUMPETS

The Book of Joel contains three crises which are referred to as the “*Day of the Lord*”. The prophet prophesied in the day of the locust plagues: the current Day of the Lord was then upon the nation. In chapter two, the prophet introduced Israel to a near-future Day of the Lord: a military threat from the Babylonian army was just around the corner. Chapter three introduced Israel to the eschatological crisis which would culminate in Israel’s final deliverance and restoration.

At the heart of the prophecy, chapter two introduces the audience to two very distinct trumpets.

THESE TRUMPETS GIVE THE BLUEPRINTS FOR TURNING THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD INTO DELIVERANCE AND BLESSING.

Trumpets served two purposes in the Old Testament – to warn and to gather. Joel’s two trumpets fulfill these functions as well – the first is a trumpet to warn; the second is a trumpet to gather.

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.*” This first trumpet is one of warning – a warning to hear correctly. Israel had to hear the proper prophetic interpretation of the moment, for a greater danger was on the horizon.

The locust plagues were only the precursor. The nation was set for a military invasion, and it was the Lord who was directing the army.

It was the watchmen to whom Joel directed his command to “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.**

In our present generation leading up to the return of Jesus, God also wants to sound the alarm. He desires to bring forth Day-of-the-Lord watchmen – preachers who will cause the Church to tremble and who will give people understanding of God’s heart in the midst of end-time shakings and judgment.

Jeremiah stated that in the last days we would understand God’s shakings perfectly. This will come because these watchmen will stand in the counsel of the Lord to hear, perceive, and mark His word (Jer. 23:18 – 20; Hag. 2:6 – 8). They will discern the seasons and bring biblical understanding to God’s people for the purposes of turning them to the Lord in sincerity and truth. Daniel also describes these preachers as ones who know God, are strong, do great exploits with Him, and feed many with the knowledge of God (Dan. 11:32 – 33; 12:3).

THE FIRST TRUMPET

must be sounded in our time. The coming Day of the Lord must be preached to **create alarm** in God’s people and to cause us to tremble before His Word. Without the preaching of the current prophetic season and the Day of the Lord, trembling will not be produced in our hearts. Declaring the urgency of the hour is necessary and vital for God’s people to stop running Church business-as-usual and instead gather for corporate prayer and fasting.

Without urgency, we may pray for a season, but our hearts are not rent and a culture of prayer is not formed. Without urgency, elders will not lay down their agendas for growth and expansion in order to support continual solemn assemblies. Without urgency, both elders and congregants will not reallocate resources to prayer.



URGENCY WILL ALSO CHANGE OUR PRAYER FOCUS.

Joel 2:17 reveals the agenda when we gather to fast and pray within such a context: *“Spare your people, O Lord.”* Without the revelation of the Day of the Lord, this would not be our cry in intercession.

A low-angle, close-up photograph of a person's legs from the knees down. They are wearing dark, possibly black or dark grey, cargo-style pants with visible pockets and a drawstring waist. They are also wearing brown, worn-in leather boots with laces. The person is standing on a grey asphalt surface. In the background, there is a blurred view of a road and some trees, suggesting an outdoor setting. A black rectangular box is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing white text.

**HOW THEN
SHALL WE LIVE?**

In Joel 2:12 – 17, God tells His people exactly what we are to do to receive His mercy and deliverance in times of crisis. In Joel’s generation, He warned them of a coming Babylonian invasion, **but gave a way out: gather for solemn assemblies.**

This response that God required of Israel is not limited to her in times past, but is for all of God’s people today too. God is asking His people for a specific response. He has made it clear in His Word what He desires from us.

Joel 2:12 – 17 is the clearest passage in the Word of God that comprehensively lays out what God wants us to do in times of crisis – both on local and global scales. He wants us to come together in sacred assemblies.

It is a clear requirement for the Body of Christ as the global drama unfolds at the End of the Age. **This is because God wants us to have holy confidence in Him so that we will act with certainty in times of crisis. God wants to remove all false props so that we put our hope only in Him. God will shake all that can be shaken so as to “force” the whole world – including His people – into a corner of desperation where they cannot find any solution apart from Him.**

In Joel 1:13 – 14, Joel called the people to “*come, lie all night in sackcloth*” as they fasted and gathered in solemn assemblies. They were to gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord to cry out in prayer.

This was in light of the continuing devastation from the locust plagues and drought.

In Joel 2, He called them to the same response of fasting and prayer in light of a coming military invasion by the Babylonians. This response of fasting and prayer will also pave the way for Israel’s future victory and deliverance during the Antichrist’s reign of terror that will come at the End of the Age (Joel 3).



A sunset landscape with a dark sky transitioning to a bright orange glow at the horizon. In the foreground, the silhouettes of two people stand on a dark, rocky cliff edge, looking out over the sea and distant mountains. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and casting long shadows.

**THE RESPONSE
THAT GOD DESIRES**

TURN TO GOD WITH WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

(JOEL 2:12 - 13)

God requires that we turn to Him with wholeheartedness and love Him with all of our heart (Matt. 22:37). He requires that we respond to His love for us by loving Him, because **God wants our hearts more than anything else**. This is powerful just in and of itself. The fact that He desires our love more than anything reveals His heart. As we give our hearts to Him as an offering of love, we turn from sin and darkness and flee from all that is adversarial against God and He delivers us.

God gives us insight into what “turning to Him with all our heart” looks like. **It involves turning to Him in repentance, fasting, and prayer. This is God’s definition of wholeheartedness.** However, this is resisted by many in the Body of Christ today. Indeed, a fasted lifestyle is an unfamiliar discipline for the Church of Jesus Christ today.



REND OUR HEART

(JOEL 2:13)

Rending our hearts before God is a non-negotiable part of wholeheartedness. To rend means “to tear something violently or forcibly”. When we violently tear our hearts away from areas of sin, we align ourselves with what God requires.

Traditionally, the people of Israel would tear their garments to show their grief and desperation. However, God is after something deeper – He desires the rending of our hearts. **This speaks of spiritual violence and radically dealing with matters of the heart** (Matt. 11:12).

In essence, the prophet Joel was exhorting Israel, “Tear your hearts! If there are any issues that are quenching the Holy Spirit, get rid of them!”

This is exactly what Jesus exhorted in Matt. 5:29, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off...”* He was talking about a radical tearing away from sin and a radical pursuit of righteousness that painfully tears the heart in the process. **In other words, God wants us to radically forsake all compromise!**

Some people pursue wholeheartedness in such a casual way that it allows for compromise. Some want a wholeheartedness that is gentle, easy, and tame. However, there is no such thing.

There will often be pain when we cooperate with the Lord to pull out whole root systems of bondage in our lives. Sometimes it hurts to press through until we get a breakthrough; yet, it is the only way to freedom. Oftentimes we would rather not change our lifestyles and still want God to set us free. We want the Lord to cause our problems to evaporate without any costs or struggles, and without the pain of having to tear our hearts. However, this is not what the Lord wants. **He is looking for an intensely personal rending of hearts, because He has done and is constantly doing the same for us.**

We often fail to realise that God does not love us in a detached and distant way, but instead tears His heart as He pursues us in love. God the Father tore His heart when He sent Jesus for us.

Jesus tore His heart when He went to the cross. His heart is also torn as He sees His people refuse to repent and suffers long as He waits for us to respond.

Indeed, this pain of tearing the heart is often overlooked. We do not mind fasting a few meals or giving a few hours of our time to cry out in the prayer room.

Yet, the tearing of our hearts in love for Him is what the Lord desires and is an inescapable part of turning to Him in wholeheartedness.

Our confidence is that the Lord will empower us in our efforts, because He is a good, kind and gracious God.



CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S KINDNESS AND MERCY

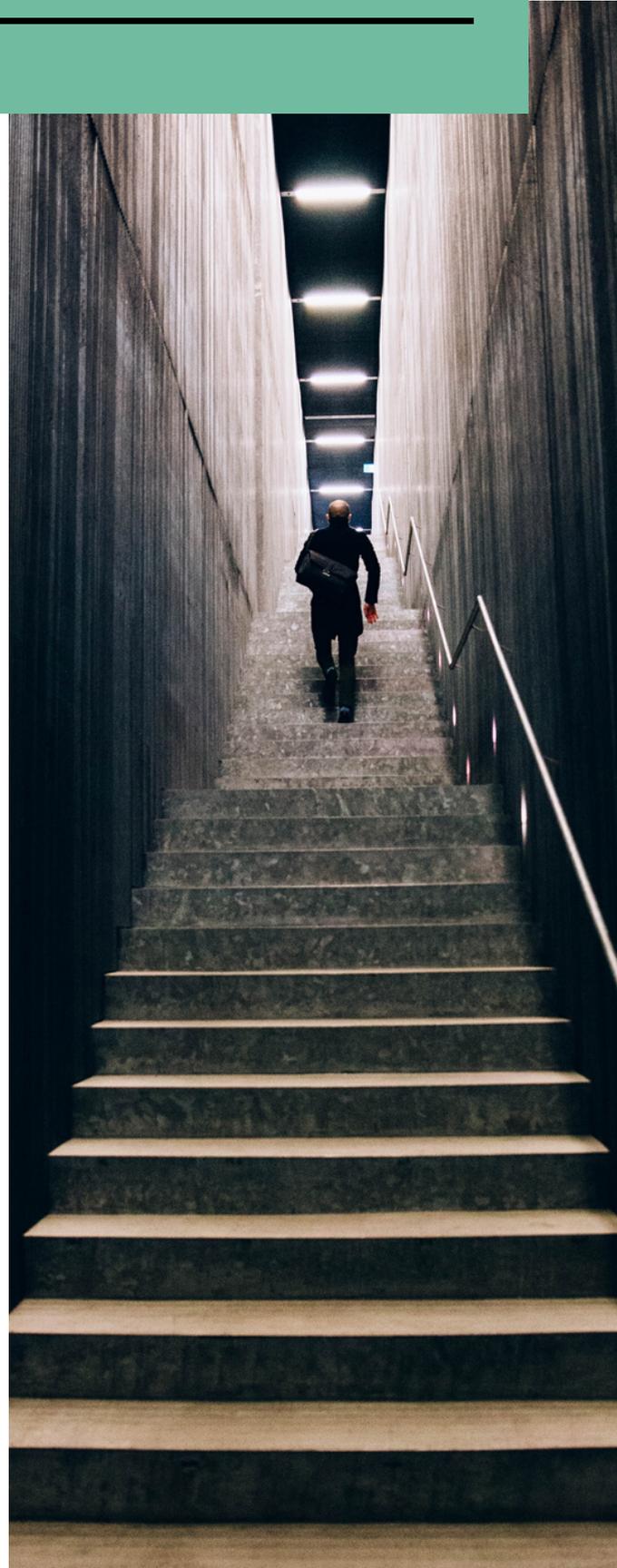
(JOEL 2:13-14)

Joel's call for the people of Israel to return to the Lord was based on who God is. God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness and relents from doing harm. He always desires to make a way of deliverance. The knowledge of God's heart for us makes returning to Him possible and wise, and gives us courage to tear our hearts in repentance. If we take one step toward Him, He will take ten steps toward us.

THE LORD IS GRACIOUS.

He evaluates us differently from anyone else. He remembers our frailty and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He is not like a harsh military leader or an angry coach that rejects any form of weakness. God is "human-friendly" in His way of relating with us.

His requirements are within the reach of the weak because of His all-sufficient grace (*1 Jn. 5:4; Mat. 11:30*).



THE LORD DELIGHTS IN MERCY.

One of God's main delights as He governs the universe is to watch the expressions and the heart responses of His people as we encounter His relentless mercy. He enjoys what happens in us when we understand that we get a new start after many failures. (Mic. 7:18)

THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). He looks for ways to forgive the wicked without violating their free will and His justice. Furthermore, God is not easily provoked by the weakness of His people. Jesus spoke of His patience to the Church in Thyatira as He calls them to repentance (Rev. 2:20 - 22).

THE LORD HAS GREAT KINDNESS.

When we believe that He is kind, then we have confidence to press through whatever hinders our full repentance. We can also ask Him to help us as we seek to repent (Rom. 2:4).



THE LORD RELENTS FROM DOING HARM

(JOEL 2:13)

God also desires to relent from releasing deserved judgment upon nations. When a nation or city awakens and repents before the Lord, He is able to send blessing to them without violating His justice or their free will. This does not mean that God randomly changes His mind, surprising even Himself in the process. Rather, it means that **He responds to the free will of man when man chooses to repent and at the same time, His justice is not violated.**

There are two stages to the execution of God's decrees. First, the decree is established in the heavenly courts. Second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute His judgment. Under certain conditions, the decree can be rescinded even after it has been established (Zeph. 2:1 – 3).

God is willing to relent or cancel the decree instead of executing it.

In response to prayer and through prayer, God can change the decree He initially established in the heavenly courts. Courses of events and end results can be changed.

One great example 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 from judgment if there were only fifty righteous people in it. The Lord said that He would, so Abraham pressed the question, "If there were only ten righteous in the city, would You spare them?" The Lord told Abraham that He would (Gen. 18:22 – 33).

Sadly, not even ten righteous people could be found in the city. However, for the righteous ones (Lot and his family), the Lord in His mercy sent His angels to deliver them before He rained fire and brimstone down from heaven.

THE MYSTERIOUS
"PERHAPS OF GOD"
THAT RELEASES
"POCKETS OF MERCY"
(JOEL 2:13 - 14)

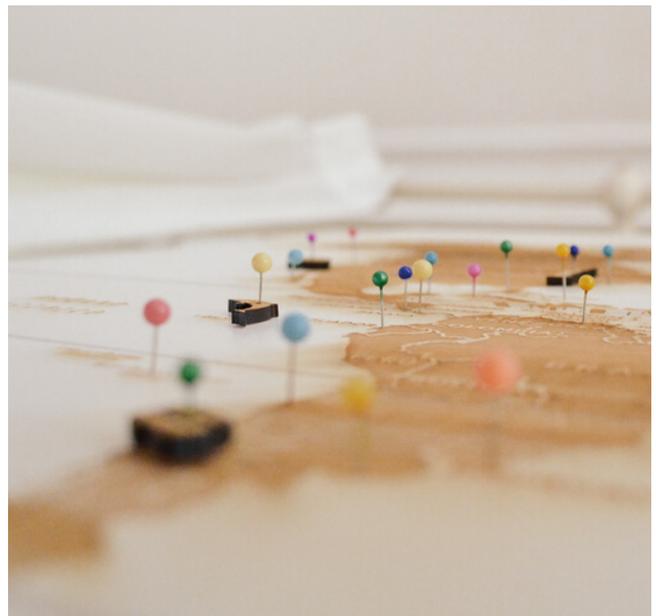
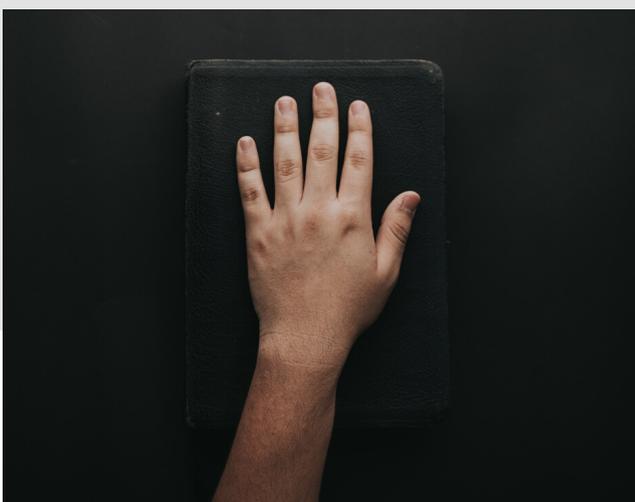


The place of immunity from the judgment of God is to live in His favor. Jesus' work on the cross provides us with the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17 – 21), and accepting this gift of righteousness is a necessary starting point to receiving God's favor. However, in order for God to release His favor to geographical areas in context of national crises, His people in the land also need to live in a culture of long-term corporate wholeheartedness to God. **These will be the places of greatest safety in the earth – places where His people are developing a corporate, long-term history in wholeheartedness before God.**

As our God is One who wants to turn from judgment and leave a blessing, He wants to transform would-be “disaster zones” into “revival centers”. This is the mystery of the grace of God. The Lord does not keep us guessing as if this was a game. Rather, He lays out clearly what He is looking for in times of crisis and judgment and the desire of His heart to bless in accordance to the response of His people.

In His judgments, God knows the full implications of all that is involved when He releases them and has many reasons behind His actions as well as His silence. He invites us to trust His heart, press in to seek Him in prayer and trust that He is merciful.

This is the **partnership** that He invites His people into. First, *God initiates* what He wants by declaring it in His Word and stirring our hearts with His desires.



Then, *we respond in obedience and through prayer* to God's initiative. Third, *God answers* our responses by releasing blessings that He withholds until He hears our cries.

In Joel's day, in light of the Babylonian invasion that Israel faced, God invited His people to cry out to Him on the premise that perhaps He would provide pockets of mercy in the midst of the invasion. Perhaps He would give cities of refuge. *“Perhaps He will leave a blessing behind Him”* (Joel 2:14). In other words, He could have transformed the place that would have been a **“disaster zone” into a “revival center”** and make it a place of sovereign blessing. He was simply waiting for His people to respond and cry out to Him.

A group of people, mostly women, are shown from the chest up, clapping their hands. They are wearing dark clothing, and the background is dark and out of focus. The lighting is warm and focused on the hands, creating a sense of movement and energy.

GATHER THE PEOPLE
AND ***SANCTIFY*** THE
CONGREGATION

(JOEL 2:15 - 16)



JOEL'S SECOND TRUMPET was the call to a sacred assembly of fasting and prayer. Fasting positions our hearts to experience the grace of God in a greater way and is an act of humbling ourselves before the Lord.

Joel called for a “sacred” assembly because these gatherings had to be sacred in their priority for the people of Israel. **It was not the time for business-as-usual** for the nation and all other schedules – whether ministry, personal, or work had to be laid aside to make seeking God the top priority. God especially wanted His leaders to set apart people under them for the purposes of seeking Him. In our time, this means re-directing whatever resources necessary – whether time, money or manpower spent on other projects towards gathering together to fast and pray.

IT MAY SEEM EXTREME,
BUT EXTREME TIMES
REQUIRE EXTREME
MEASURES.

To make it clear that this was a solemn assembly that no one was to be exempted from, the prophet Joel called everyone from the elders to the children to newborn babies to assemble. Even newly-weds were to forsake their customary first-year exemption from duties (Deut 24:5) to gather and cry out to God. This was crucial since absolutely no one would be spared from the coming invasion of the Babylonian army.

It is the same in our day. **Gathering to pray is not just for the intercessors or the prayer ministries.** God’s Word is clear. He wants everyone – young, old, male, female, pastors, congregants, ministers, marketplace workers – to gather together to pray.

GIVE OURSELVES TO EARNEST PRAYER

(JOEL 2:17)

Joel called the priests or the leadership to lead the people in earnest prayer. God does not want prayers out of duty or routine but as His people, we cry out for His visitation and mercy with earnest hearts. In Joel's day, these particular prayers were prayed in light of a coming military invasion from Babylon, so that the nations would not rule over Israel. Today, these prayers still apply in light of the crisis we find ourselves in.

Joel gave two specific prayers that the priests were to pray in light of the coming crisis.

First, **"Spare Your people, O God!"** This was a cry for God to release supernatural protection, provision and direction to Israel, and should be our cry to Him today.

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?'"** Just like in Joel's day, we need to ask the Lord not to let the nations of the earth mock the people of God as though God were not among us. We remind the Lord that His own reputation is at stake; we beseech Him to come to vindicate His people for the sake of His name! God Himself wants to bring glory to His Son's name by vindicating His prayerful saints, showing Himself to be the One who is present with those who fear Him.



The way that the harvest will come in from all nations is when the unbelievers recognize that believers have been given a dynamic love relationship with a God who acts on behalf of His people. They will recognize that those who obey Him experience His power.

When the people of God come together to seek Him in wholehearted corporate prayer and fasting, **God will hear and answer.** Before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus told the disciples to tarry in the upper room in prayer (Acts 1:8). His disciples pressed in together for ten days of night and day prayer before the Holy Spirit came upon them suddenly in power! Of course their ten days of prayer happened during the kairos prophetic timing of God.

**WE ARE GOING TO SEE
THIS SAME DIVINE
PATTERN PLAY OUT
AGAIN IN OUR DAY!**

People with wholehearted love for God who gather in long-term corporate prayer and fasting will result in His unprecedented power breaking forth in our day.

A “suddenly” of God will come in response to the people of God. What we saw in Acts 1 and 2 was the very pattern described by the prophet Joel. God’s people gathered in consecration, fasting and prayer, believing and claiming the promise of God (Joel 2:12 – 17), and suddenly, the power of God broke in!

Do we see that this same pattern will apply to God’s promise of a future unprecedented end-time outpouring?

**THE UNPRECEDENTED
OUTPOURING OF GOD’S
SPIRIT IN JOEL 2:28 – 32
WILL BE THE RESULT
OF THE GOD’S PEOPLE
RESPONDING IN
ACCORDANCE TO
JOEL 2:12 – 17!**



CONCLUSION

It is at this critical time in human history that the Lord is looking for ones who will hear Him and respond to stand in the gap in the midst of crisis. Esther 4:14 says, *"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* It is time for each person to arise and be counted in this hour. **It is time to leave "business-as-usual" behind. It is time for His people to awaken to earnest prayer and fasting.**

May God grant us the spirit of the sons of Issachar, so that we will have understanding of the times and know what to do (1 Chr. 12:32). Let us rise up in such a time as this, responding to His call to rend our hearts and gather in solemn assemblies in corporate intercession and worship!



ac•tion

/'ækʃ(ə)n/

noun

An act that one consciously wills and that may be characterized by physical or mental activity.

LINKS

Full Article Link: bit.ly/makingsense_covid19
Join us in Sacred Assembly: bit.ly/prayerroomschedule

RESOURCES



Visit www.joel2lifestyle.com for 52 weeks of discipleship and study on the Joel 2 Lifestyle that God is looking for.



Visit bit.ly/forerunnermessages to browse and purchase our available Study Guides and Teaching Series.

IHOP - ONE THING MINISTRIES

At the International House of Prayer – One Thing Ministries, the Lord has called us to be a Forerunner Community committed to:

- *Proclaim the Beauty of Jesus and His Glorious Return;*
- *Prepare the people of God to walk in the Fullness of God's Purposes and*
- *Participate in the Fulfilment of the Great Commission from the place of 24/7 Prayer with Worship.*

The Lord has invited us as a community of believers to be the friends-of-the-Bridegroom-type **forerunners** who prepare ourselves and others for the unique dynamics of the End Times.

As a **missions base**, we seek to equip the people of God with the forerunner spirit and to empower them with apostolic grace and prophetic anointing to preach the Gospel, proclaim the return of Jesus, do the works of justice, plant Houses of Prayer and disciple nations.

The **heart** of our missions base is 24/7 worship and prayer; thus, we seek to establish a 24/7 House of Prayer in Singapore – a perpetual solemn assembly in prayer and fasting in the spirit of the tabernacle of David, and to pray for the release of the fullness of God's promise, purpose and power for our generation.