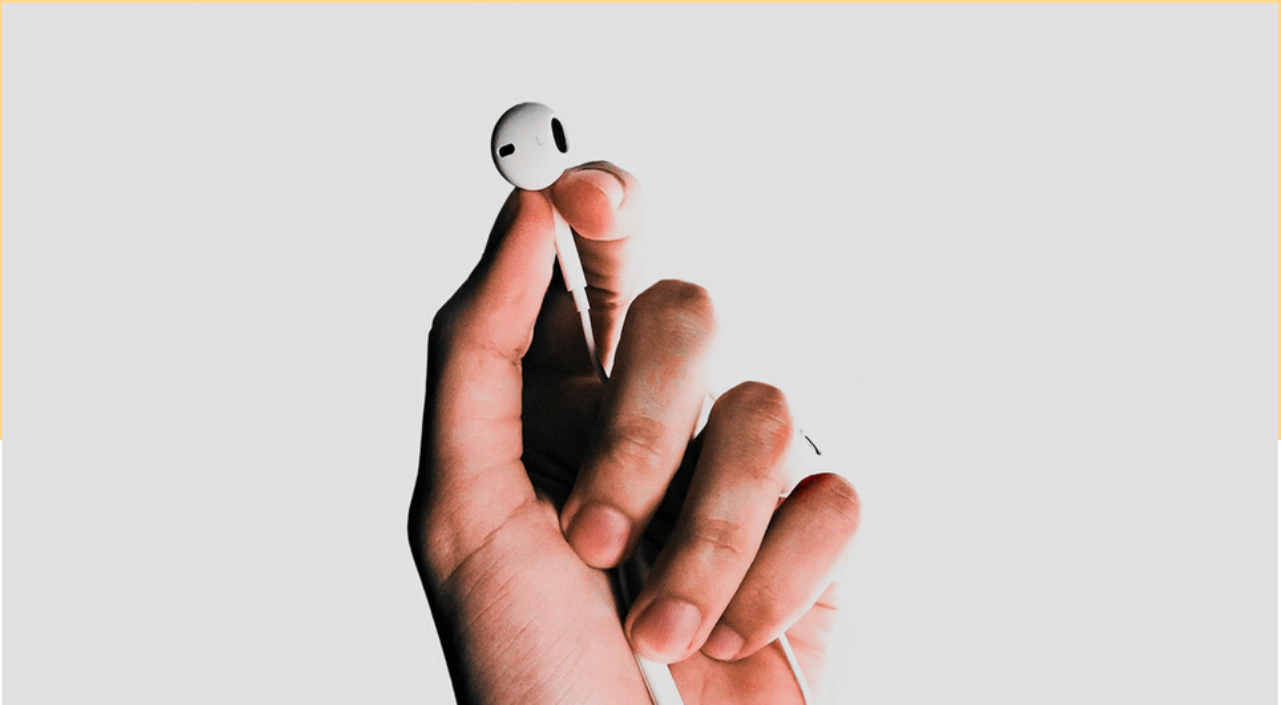


A close-up photograph of two hands, one from a person with a dark blue sleeve and the other from a person with a dark green plaid sleeve, cupped together with palms facing up. The hands are positioned to hold something, but the object is not visible. A black rectangular text box is centered over the hands.

**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.

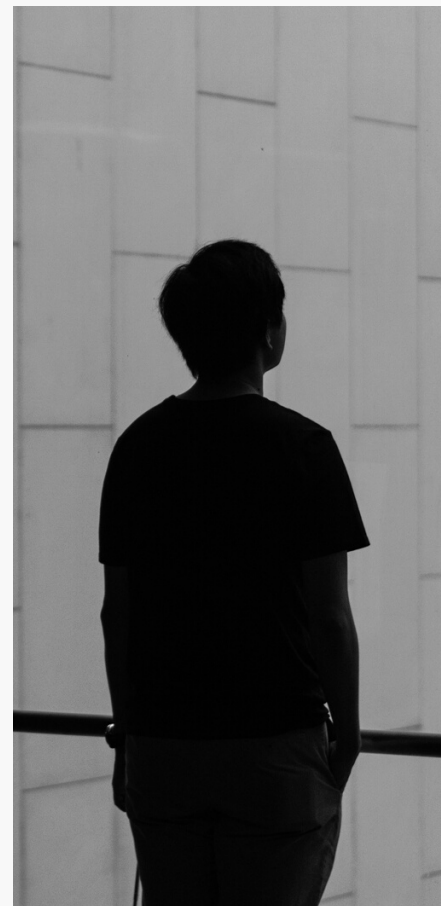
What we must realize is that the *"perhaps of God"* is directly related to our hearing – and hearing correctly – at the crucial junctures of history.

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.