

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

Session 03: Military Invasions & the Outpouring of the Spirit Before the Day of the Lord (Joel Chapter 2)

MILITARY INVASIONS AND THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD (JOEL CHAPTER 2)

Joel chapter 2 is one of the most important chapters in the Word of God we need to understand in this hour of history. Though it had a limited expression and fulfillment in Joel's generation, every verse in Joel 2 will have its greatest expression and fulfillment in the generation of the Lord's return.

I. AN OUTLINE OF JOEL CHAPTER 2

- A. The chapter has four very distinct sections with four very important messages. In this session we're going to look at them:
- (1) Military Invasions of Israel (2:1-11)
 - **God is going to judge His people through the crisis of military invasions**
 - (2) The Necessary Response of the Nation: Solemn Assemblies (2:12-17)
 - **God has a solution to minimize and avert the judgment**
 - (3) The Heavenly Response of the Lord: Vindication of His People and Land (2:18-27)
 - **God responds in mercy when His people respond in wholeheartedness**
 - (4) The Outpouring of the Spirit Before the Day of the Lord (2:28-32)
 - **God is going to empower His people in the midst of the crisis**

II. THE FUTURE FULFILLMENT OF JOEL CHAPTER 2

- A. Joel chapter 2 is all about "the Day of the Lord" - what happens "before," during and "after" it. In 2:1 we read "**Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on My Holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the Lord is near...**" In 2:11 we read: "**For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?**" And then in 2:28-32 we read "**I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh....before the great and awesome Day of the Lord.**"
- B. Both the military crisis of 2:1 and 2:11 as well as the outpouring of the Spirit in 2:28 are centered around "the Day of the Lord." We need to understand both dimensions of God's purposes during this climactic hour of history. The military conflict is as essential to God's end-time plans as the outpouring of the Spirit. We need to proclaim both.
- C. There are a number of reasons within the text that I believe we should Joel 2 - all four sections - as entirely eschatological with a limited historical foreshadow in the Babylonian military invasion of Israel between 606 and 586BC:
1. The declaration in 2:2 that a military crisis of this magnitude "has never been before, nor will ever be again after through the years of *all* generations." Since the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 70AD surpassed the horror of Babylonian invasion significantly, we're forced to look to a future fulfillment.
 2. The full "vindication" (2:23) of the people and the land of Israel in the wake of the conflict described in 2:18-27 has never been fulfilled. For example in 2:26 we

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read that “My people will never again be put to shame.” This promise of ultimate and permanent restoration stands to contradict the idea that Joel chapter 2 was fulfilled when the Jews returned to the land after Babylonians exile.

3. The “Day of the Lord” in 2:1 is the same “Day of the Lord” in 2:28-32. And the “Day of the Lord” in 2:28-32 is the eschatological Day of the Lord. To be faithful to the structure of the text its important that we view everything between 2:1 and 2:28-32 as being prophetically connected. This is not to say we should reject the idea that Babylonian and Roman military invasion do not represent a limited fulfillment of the prophecy; it’s simply to say that the full expression will be seen at the end of the age in the generation of the Lord’s return.
4. The military invasion of 2:1-9 is associated with cosmic disturbances in 2:10. This connection is consistent throughout the prophetic writings (Matthew 24:15-22 and 24:29-31; Zechariah 12-14; Revelation chapter 6; etc.). Some commentators argue that this is symbolic language that had fulfillment in a historical military invasion. This is an error. The invasion, the outpouring and the cosmic disturbance of Joel chapter 2 are all actual events that will be fulfilled at the end of the age.

III. THE DAY OF THE LORD MILITARY INVASION (2:1-11)

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, **2** a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. **3** Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. **4** Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. **5** As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. **6** Before them peoples are in anguish; all faces grow pale. **7** Like warriors they charge; like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his way; they do not swerve from their paths. **8** They do not jostle one another; each marches in his path; they burst through the weapons and are not halted. **9** They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls, they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. **10** The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. **11** The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it? (Joel 2:1-11)

- A. The need to proclaim the coming Day of the Lord military crisis and its unprecedented nature (1-2)
- B. The horrific description of the Day of the Lord military invasion (3-9)
- C. The cosmic disturbances associated with the Day of the Lord military invasion (10)

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- D. The sovereignty of God over the Day of the Lord military invasion (11a)
- E. The description of the Day of the Lord and the question of who can endure it (11b)

IV. THE NATION'S NECESSARY RESPONSE TO THE DAY OF THE LORD CRISIS (2:12-17)

12 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; **13** and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. **14** Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? **15** Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; **16** gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. **17** Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:12-17)

- A. Turn to the Lord with all our hearts (12-13a)
- B. Turn to a kind God who relents from disaster (13b)
- C. The mystery of God's response to our response (14)
- D. Call a solemn assembly with corporate fasting (15)
- E. Gather every social demographic in the nation (16)
- F. Call the leadership of the nation to united prayer and fasting in light of the escalating violence (17)

V. THE HEAVENLY RESPONSE OF THE LORD: THE VINDICATION OF THE PEOPLE & LAND (2:18-27)

18 Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. **19** The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. **20** "I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. **21** "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! **22** Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. **23** "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. **24** "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. **25** I will restore to you the years that the

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swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. **26** “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. **27** You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame. (Joel 2:18-27)

- A. The response of the Lord to the response of the people (18)
- B. Restoration of the land and removal of enemies (19-20)
- C. The vindication and permanent restoration of the people and land of Israel (21-27)

VI. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:28-32)

28 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. **29** Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. **30** “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. **31** The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. **32** And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28-32)

- A. The outpouring of the Spirit “after” the national response to crisis (28-29)
 - 1. “All flesh”
 - 2. Sons and daughters prophesying
 - 3. Old men dreaming
 - 4. Young men seeing visions
 - 5. Pouring out the Spirit on male and females
- B. Signs and wonders on earth and in heaven (30-31a)
 - 1. Blood
 - 2. Fire
 - 3. Columns of smoke
- C. The timing of the outpouring and cosmic disturbance (31b)
- D. The salvation of those who call upon the Lord before, during and after the crisis (32)