

Joel 2 – Agents of God

A Bible Study by Dr. Harley Ihm

Question - What are some of the things God has used throughout history to open the hearts of His people so they will wake up and choose to come back to Him? (*Flood – all the thoughts of man were only on evil all the time; Assyrian army, God allowed Israel who was not following Him to be taken into captivity in Assyria in 722 BC. God allowed the Babylonians to take Judah into captivity in 586 BC. God allowed droughts and famines that caused the Hebrews to go down to Egypt where Joseph was sent as a captive. God used the slave traders, the foolish brothers and Pharaoh to work for His glory and the good of the people. God used the Greeks and the Romans during the 400 years of silence to prepare the way for the Lord and for the spread of the Gospel.*)

Question – How does God still use agents to call us to Himself? (*Read Matthew 24:1-8. What does Jesus say God will use to get our attention throughout history? Why does the female body experience birth pains? How does nature act as our birth pains? That truth will not end until Jesus returns for us and establishes the new heavens and the new earth.*)

Our Creator loves us with a jealous love (Look up: Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16; Joshua 24:19; Psalm 78:58; 79:5; Nahum 1:2; Zechariah 1:14; 8:2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 7:2) Jealous denotes that God is the only one worthy of worship. All else are liars who deceive people into believing what is false and will lead to their destruction. God's jealousy is born out of His love for His creation. God will fight for us!)

Read Joel 2:1-11

V1 - Blow the trumpet – God is telling the people to blow the shophar, the ram's horn that was the far sounding horn to send out the warning where everyone will hear. The great army of locusts that are coming to devour the land are God's trumpet warnings to call the sinful people to repentance. Why does God allow tragedies to come? Without them people would not see the need for God's deliverance.

Question – How do you and I sound the trumpet for God to warn people? (*We embrace Jesus' call to go daily to all ethnic groups making disciples, leading people to Jesus so they will embrace their God and live. Our lifestyle evangelism is the trumpet of God that we are called to sound as Christians. If we do not sound the trumpet call of God, what are we doing to the world we live in?*)

V 2 - Darkness and gloom close at hand – Just as the locusts cleared the land and removed the crops, the grains and fruits, a darkness took over their lives. They lived without hope in a devastated land. When the day of the Lord comes upon us, there will be no hope, nowhere to turn. The promises of God were ignored and only darkness remains. Likewise, there are no second chances when we breathe our last breath or when Jesus returns instantly for the Day of Judgment. Now is the day of salvation, this moment (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Question – Who can predict the moment of their death? (*No one. This is why we should sound the horn, hear the plea of God for us to run to Him and sound it for all who have not. If we love our own life and we love those around us, we cannot remain quiet. Pick up the shophar of God. Share the truth of the Gospel with a hunger to save as many lives as we can. Think of our*

task as a soldier who realizes his company is walking into an ambush that will mean complete annihilation. Would we just hope they survive or run to them and warn them? That is the Great Commission.)

In 1966 National Geographic sponsored a documentary of locust plagues in the Near East. It portrayed a locust plague in 1915 and how they came in waves as described by Joel across the land and stripped the land of all vegetation. The film substantiated Joel's graphic description in detail. The prophet did not exaggerate.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/american-colony-in-jerusalem/articles-and-essays/the-locust-plague-of-1915-photograph-album/>

Just as the locust plague upon the land was unstoppable, the Day of the Lord will come upon earth and nothing can prevent it. God will come to put an end to this broken and fallen world that is being devastated by man's sins. God's love for man is too great to allow sin and evil to keep destroying what He has created. Our God IS a jealous God and will cleanse the land forever.

Read Joel 2:12-18

Question – What does God call on the people to do in light of the coming disaster? (*He encourages them that it is not too late. They need to return to Him with all their hearts, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Weeping and mourning were a sign of a broken heart and true repentance. The fasting would involve making time to kneel broken before God.*)

Question – How can you and I return to God with all our heart? Do we need to? (*Of course we need to, we are not perfect. Our walk with God is connected to our focused prayer and study and a hunger to listen to God and obey, to walk with Him.*)

V 13 – Rend your hearts and not your garments. The Old Testament sign of repentance was shown by tearing your garments so everyone would know you were broken, at least on the outside. However, God is not impressed with torn garments. God wants a broken heart.

“For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:16-17).

Question – How have you seen that God is slow to anger and abounding in love? (*Note that Joel tell us that God is not in a hurry to send calamity upon us. God does not want to see us suffer. However, He will allow it if it will cause us to repent and give our heart over to Him. God wants to bless us. That is His first choice.*)

Sound the trumpet and declare a holy fast, a sacred gathering with leaders and all the people, even the children. It is time to come together as a body to give our hearts over to God as ONE people. That is why the church should be the most important part of our lives. It unites us in purpose and thought. If you think that is an overstatement by preachers, then read John 17 and see what Jesus prayed for the church.

Read Joel 2:19-27

Notice verse 18, “If the people all come together in unity and offer up their hearts to God, THEN the Lord will be JEALOUS for His land and take pity on His people. If we want to see this church and THE CHURCH OF CHRIST be what God wants it to be, we will see God's mission

as the greatest mission on earth. We will see God's love as the only love worth living and dying for. We will see serving our Lord and walking with our Lord as the reason we are alive. We will live to make a difference in this world in Jesus' name. Healing comes when our hearts are broken and offered up to God who is jealous to have them for His own.

Question – Just as the Lord warned of complete destruction, what does the Lord tell the people will happen IF they listen to Him? (*He promises to bless the people with prosperous crops. He will probe to all the world that Israel if truly His people. He will bless His people no matter what they have done in the past, no matter how devastating their fate might have been. He is still the omnipotent God who bows to no one, not the powers of natures or armies or kings. God is calling on nature itself to praise His name.*)

Verse 25 begins to reveal the prophecy of what is coming from the blessings of God upon His faithful. What was without hope is now filled with hope. God's people will be so blessed that His name will be praised and His wonders declared. When that blessing comes never again will His people be shamed. They will know that He is the Lord our God and there is no other God. We will glory in wearing the name of the Lord. That prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Christ. Verse 28 begins the rest of the story that will come shortly after Jesus conquers death and ascends into heaven.

Read Acts 2:14-21

Note the miraculous events that day.

1. The Holy Spirit came upon the 12 apostles. There was the sign of the tongue of fire that separated and came to rest over each of the 12 showing the Old Testament sign of the presence of God upon these 12 men.
2. There was the SOUND like the blowing of a violent wind. The people in Jerusalem heard it and rushed to see what this hurricane like sound was that filled the city. Notice it was a sound like a hurricane or tornado but there was no violent wind, only the sound like there was one. It was God's 2nd miraculous touch.
3. The 12 began to speak in the tongues or language of all those in Jerusalem. These were 12 Galileans who did not know vast languages and everyone knew it. In fact those in the crowd named off 15 different regions they had come from and wanted to know, "How is it that each of us hears them in our own native tongue (dialect)?" Hmmm, 15 dialects spoken by 12 not highly educated men. Miracle #3. These were all fulfillments of the prophecy of Joel concerning the day of the Lord's coming.

Read Joel 2:28-32

God says that at that time He will pour out His Spirit on all people. Read Acts 2:36-40.

Who is promised the gift of the Holy Spirit that only God can pour out? (*ALL who call upon the Lord, all who come to God through Jesus to have their sins forgiven.*)

What does Peter on this prophetic day proclaim the people can do who want to accept forgiveness in Jesus' name? (*Repent and be baptized into His name for the forgiveness of sins and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit just like Joel foretold would happen. This promise was for all who are far off, Jew and Gentile. Everyone who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.*)