



A nation has invaded my land

The prophecy of Joel

Study 2

Joel Chapter 1:1-12

(Vs1) "The word of the Lord that came to Joel son of Pethuel.

The prophet Joel had received a personal revelation from His Messiah. This "word" was not only a revelation to his mind and heart by the Spirit of God but an encounter with His Messiah the pre-incarnate Son of God who is called the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew word for "the word" used here denotes the word as a person coming to Joel and revealing to him what will happen in the future. This was the precise case with John on the Island of Patmos when the Lord Jesus appeared to him personally to reveal the present and the future to John. This was the Word of God Himself and the one who was in the beginning with God, who was God and who became flesh and dwelt among men, namely the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

When God is doing something or about to do something He always reveals it through his prophets. "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan (secrets) to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7)

Today we have His word the Bible and while His revelation of the Word is given to every believer through the Spirit of God

there will be those to whom the word will be revealed as prophecy concerning future events.

(Vs 2-3) "Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your forefathers? Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation."

God is always trying to grab the attention of his people, especially when He wants them to understand what He is doing and is going to do in the future. In our busy lifestyles it is easy to forget that as believers in the Lord Jesus we are citizens of an invisible and eternal kingdom and not citizens of this present age that is rapidly passing away. When the Lord reveals His Word to us it is to bring about the spiritual reformation of our daily lives.

Notice that God firstly speaks to the elders, to those who have the responsibility to lead and to guard the flock from the wolves especially those in sheep's clothing who would destroy the flock from within. Through Joel God was warning the complacent spiritual leaders of Israel to wake up and to see what was coming upon the nation.

Prophetically it is a warning to the elders, pastors and the shepherds in the Western Church in these last days of impending judgment. The comfort zones of Western

Christianity are about to be removed. A mighty "Babylonian" army is on the move again. It has infiltrated every western democracy and its goal is the entire subjection of the world to its god. This great army arising around the globe clearly says, "There is only one God Allah and Mohammed is his prophet." Indeed the power of "Babylon" is rising against the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of western governments and those countries traditionally associated with Christianity.

This prophecy was so important that it was to be passed on down from one generation to another so that those who were to come would know God's Word concerning the future to keep them faithful to the Lord. The events that were going to happen would be unique having nothing equaling them either in the past or in the future to come.

For Israel it would mean the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC and prophetically the future invasion of Israel by the forces of the Antichrist at the end of this age. However, for the Church this prophecy was something to pass on down from one generation to another as it concerns the last days.

It is a tragedy that in most Churches today the whole area of Bible prophecy and Eschatology is being sadly neglected by many pastors and teachers and in many cases simply ignored in favor of Kingdom Dominion theology and the faith prosperity doctrines. Around thirty years ago there was much more interest in Bible prophecy than there is today and Jesus' coming is much closer than it was thirty years ago.

Those who understand God's prophetic purposes for Israel, for the Church and for the world have a responsibility to pass it on to younger believers who do not know about Bible prophecy. The Bible itself says, "Where there is no vision the people perish." In its context it does not mean people having dreams and visions but God's people not seeing His plans and purposes for now and for the future revealed in His word.

If you are an elder, presbyter, teacher or pastor and you are ignoring Bible prophecy and failing to teach the sheep about the doc-

trine of the end times and Jesus Second coming you will be held personally accountable to the Lord. For the first century believers the Second Coming of Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom was a priority in their preaching and teaching and is found all the way through the New Testament. They preached the Gospel of the Kingdom that included the cross, the resurrection of Jesus and His Second Coming.

God Himself warns us not to refuse to listen to Jesus, the truest prophet that has ever lived. "The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I myself will call him to account"(Deuteronomy 18:18-19). "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like Me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people'"(Acts 3:22-23).

None of us can afford to ignore the prophetic words of Jesus. If we do then we will answer to God for it. If ever there is a generation in the Church that desperately needs to hear Bible prophecy it is this generation of believers enchanted by the faith prosperity hype, Postmodernism and by Kingdom Now and Dominion teaching.

(Vs 4) "What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten."

There is nothing more devastating than a plague of locusts. When they come they can be seen in the distance. The swarm looks like a great cloud rolling across the land. Every bit of greenery, every bit of foliage every strip of bark is completely devoured by these insects. The full-grown locusts move quickly across the land while the younger locusts also come picking up what is left over from the great swarm.

In its context Joel was speaking about the devastating effect the Babylonians would have on the countryside as well as in the cities. The Babylonians cut down every tree in their path, they broke down the walls of houses in the country and ultimately leveled the walls of Jerusalem and the other cities in Israel finally destroying the temple itself.

In the Bible insects or locusts are always associated with demonic forces. We see this clearly in the book of Revelation. "When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke of a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss and out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth" (Revelation 9:2-3)

These "locusts" have stripped everything bare. Today when you look at the world at large these demonic forces have been steadily at work. Israel and the Western Church have been spiritually and morally infected. Society as a whole is degenerating into all kinds of debauchery and Godless lifestyles. False religions and sects are flourishing and numerous false prophets and teachers infest the rank and file of the Christian Church. These demonic forces have affected every area of God's inheritance today as the Devil sets the stage for the appearance of the Antichrist and his beast kingdom.

(Vs5) "Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the wine, for it has been snatched from your lips."

When you have seen the video tape of Rodney Howard Browne hyping up people to laugh and roll on the floor and calling himself the Holy Ghost Bartender you have "drunkenness." Indeed it is a spirit controlling him and the crowds but it is not the Spirit of God. You can also see other videos of Christians rolling, twisting and writhing their bodies around on the floor and laughing uncontrollably like hyenas.

You can even see Kenneth Copeland and Rodney Howard Browne laughing uncontrollably and speaking loudly to each other

in tongues. No wonder the world laughs at this and who can blame them! In fact the Bible says that this kind of behavior evokes the derision of the unsaved!

Today virtually every Mega Church in the west is laughing and having a good time indulging themselves in spiritual drunkenness! The laughter and sensuality of the flesh masquerading as the Spirit of God is flourishing around the golden calf of prosperity, power and Kingdom Dominion in almost every church today.

In the book of Exodus we are told that when Moses stayed up in the mountain the people "rose up to play" but the Hebrew word says they "rose up to laugh." In other words it was a contrived and fleshly style of euphoria that led the people into immorality, rebellion and idolatry. The tragedy was that the leaders gave the people what they craved and gave in to their demands.

Is it any different today with the Faith prosperity preachers on television peddling God's Word for profit! Not only that but we now have the purpose driven agenda that shows the way to prosperity and success in this world! Then there are the kingdom now preachers telling us that the world is going to get better and not worse. Of course in all of these churches music and laughter are hallmarks of their whole movement.

Then you have Brian McLaren with his Postmodern philosophy of the Emerging Church that no longer maintains Biblical integrity. You can even hear Brian McLaren in an interview denigrate the total sufficiency of the cross to provide Salvation. In an interview on YouTube he actually said, "The cross isn't central, the cross is almost a distraction and false advertising for God." (End of quote)

The tragedy is all of these leaders are mixing the Word of God with error. They are producing a palatable form of Christianity that is pleasing to the tastes of the flesh but is in reality laced with spiritual arsenic.

The apostle Peter tells us that this is what false prophets and teachers do. Peter says

these people “secretly introduce destructive heresies” and that, “many will follow their shameful ways.” Peter tells us that these men are laying truth and error side by side.” As Jacob Prasch has said, “There is always cheese in the rat trap” and he is right! Indeed, “A little leaven, leavens the whole lump,”

Besides God clearly says in the Old Testament that he hates a mixture and that is what all-false doctrine is. It is not all wrong but it is not all right either. The tragedy is that multitudes of professing Christians no longer have the spirit of the Bereans who we are told in the Bible, “examined the scriptures everyday to see if what Paul said was true.”

Multitudes of professing Christians no longer have the spiritual capacity to discern truth from error because they do not know what God’s Word teaches about false prophets and teachers and especially about things concerning the Last Days. Indeed the scripture is true when it says, “My people perish for lack of knowledge” and again it says, “Where there is no vision (spiritual perception and discernment) the people perish.”

This is what is happening today. Indeed the scripture is true which says, “If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do” and again it says, “If the righteous are scarcely saved where will the ungodly and sinners appear.” Today even the very elect are in danger of spiritual deception as the laughter and frivolity continues to flourish in the Church. The true wine of the joy of the Spirit has been replaced with the cheap wine of fleshly laughter and indulgence. God says to His people wake up before its too late! Throw of the stupor of spiritual drunkenness and revelry and seek after the true wine of the life of the Spirit making no provision for the flesh.

Indeed the prophet Hosea said, “ Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love (faithfulness to God) and break up your unploughed ground (your hard baked heart soil) for it is time to seek

the Lord until He comes and showers righteousness upon you.” Instead of rolling on the floor in hysterics we should be on our faces before the Lord seeking His mercy and following His commands

(Vs 6) “A nation has invaded My land, powerful and without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness.”

In its context the lion symbolizes the power of Babylon in 586 BC with its military hordes invading Judah and Jerusalem and like locusts swarming over the whole land devouring and destroying everything in its path. This is what the Babylonians did. However, it happened again in 70AD when the Roman armies invaded Israel and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and it is going to happen again just before Jesus comes back! This time it will affect the whole world.

In the days of the Babylonians and the Romans they used fire as well as the sword but when you consider the nuclear arsenal of today the results of that kind of firepower defy the imagination! Such will be the devastation wrought by the armies of the Antichrist! As Joel also says, “*Fire has devoured the open pastures and flames have burnt up all the trees of the fields.*”(1:19) “*Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes.*”(2:3a) When you look at the twin towers on 9/11 you have a very clear picture of what will happen around the globe at the time this army invades the West. This army is also a real army, driven by demonic forces. The firepower of the beast army cannot be stopped!

The ferocious nature of a lion is also used in scripture to portray Satan’s character, “who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” because, “The whole world lies in the power of the wicked one” and they already belong to him, however, his strategy is to undermine the faith of the people of God and this is why all of his fiery darts are aimed at the shield of faith. Peter tells us to stand firm in faith against the wiles of the devil and to draw near to God and God will draw near to us and that we

are to resist the devil and he will flee from us. Satan is absolutely ruthless and is working around the clock to destroy Israel and the faithful Church. The fangs of a lioness seeking its prey are deadly and in its claws lay the ability to inflict infectious wounds.

(Vs 7) It has laid waste My vines and ruined My fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white."

The Babylonians were ruthless and totally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The Romans were the same and the Antichrist and his forces will be no different when they invade Israel, lay siege to Jerusalem and wreak havoc across the globe. Churches and Synagogues will not be spared and all religion will be destroyed. Religious institutions that now stand will crumble and Mega Churches will be totally decimated. Many Church leaders who are having a good time will run when they see the enemy approaching because they are hirelings and not true shepherds. Many so-called prophets (profits) will hide away when they see the "Babylonians" approaching as they did in the days of Jeremiah.

Satan and his demonic forces will strip everything and throw it away as garbage. Indeed the people of God will pass through the fire of affliction and be purified and refined but come out of the fire into a glorious resurrection.

Trees draw their nourishment through their bark but if the bark is stripped they have no way of getting the nourishment they need and eventually they will shrivel up and die. Today Satan is systematically stripping the Church of its source of spiritual nourishment contained in God's Word. If Satan can get Church leaders to denigrate and to take away from the word of God then he will succeed in stripping God's people of their spiritual bark.

Now persecution always comes for the Word's sake. Jesus Himself said this was so. The main aim of the Devil is to get Christians to doubt and to deny the Word of

God and to go for something else and when you look at the spiritual condition of the western Church the Devil is succeeding in this strategy.

In the early thirties in Germany the Bible colleges and seminaries began to teach against the basic truths of the Bible with the immergence of liberalism and higher criticism and this spread into other western nations. Once Germany had fallen into this apostasy Adolph Hitler came onto the world stage.

The apostasy happening in these days will prepare the way for the Antichrist. Indeed Paul says that the falling away must come first and then the man of sin will be revealed.

One thing we need to note is that God calls the vines and the fig trees His property and while He has allowed these things to occur He has not totally abandoned His people because He is a covenant keeping God and as we will see He will intervene at the last moment and drive back the demonic forces that have invaded every area of His inheritance. God always has a faithful remnant and these will pass through the fire and be refined that they might obtain a better resurrection!

(Vs 8) "Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the husband of her youth."

Imagine a young virgin pledged to be married to a young man. The feelings are intense, the longings unabated, the desire unquenched, the anticipation of a future clearly seen but suddenly it is taken away with the sudden stroke of the bridegroom's death. What grieving, what sorrow and heartache she has. Who can console this young woman in her distress and anguish? She has lost the one she has loved!

This is the kind of attitude God required of Israel in their backslidden hearts and lives. They were not grieving at all over the loss of their first love for the Lord but is it any different in the Church today? Do we

mourn and grieve over the sad condition of our own hardness of heart and tendencies to backslide? Do we grieve over the spiritual condition of our backslidden brethren and the unbiblical practices and traditions of men wreaking havoc in the Church of God? Or are we sitting in the circle of the merry-makers laughing, living it up, and having a good time and at home in this world?

Think of that virgin espoused to her beloved, consider her anguish of heart and follow her example. You leaders who denigrate God's Word and cast His words to the ground learn from her sighing and longing over the loss of the one to which she has loved and pledged eternal loyalty and fidelity. Ask for the ancient paths and once more walk in them.

(Vs 9) "Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the Lord. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the Lord."

The grain has to do with the Word of God and the drink offerings with the life giving power of the Holy Spirit. Because of the rebellion and denigration of God's Word God Himself has sent a famine for the hearing of His Word and withheld the showers of the Spirit.

Religious activity continues but the leaders have lost their spiritual power and effectiveness. They have no power to really touch the true needs of the people. Instead they offer them the straw of purpose driven, faith prosperity, kingdom now, psychology, psychotherapy and endless counseling sessions trying to meet their "felt needs" but it is all in vain.

(Vs 10) "The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up, the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails."

Indeed the fields are white for harvest but the laborers are few. Instead of praying to the Lord of the harvest to thrust workers into His harvest field His leaders and the people by enlarge are indulging themselves in an endless run of religious activities and

programs designed to stimulate the flesh and weaken the zeal to see sinners saved and saints sanctified! For God to save the lost He has to firstly revive the Church! People being saved are the results of revival! If there is no revival in the Church then there will be no souls saved in the world! Joel tells us that the world remains unsaved; the hearts of people are like baked and dried soil that resists the seed of God's Word. The new wine of true spiritual joy, life and freshness has gone and the oil of the Spirit cannot do His saving and sanctifying work! Such was Israel's condition in the time of Jeremiah and so, by enlarge, it is the same in the Church today.

(Vs 11) "Despair, you farmers, wail you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed."

While God's people remain in a backslidden state people in the world die and go to an eternal hell. Indeed, "The harvest of the field is destroyed." Without the "wheat" and the "Barley" of God's Word people will not be saved and saints will not be sanctified! Those who have responsibility to lead and to care for God's vineyard abuse the sheep with their pernicious and poison doctrines of luxury, ease and prosperity. Indeed the prophet Amos was right when he said, "Woe to you who are complacent in Zion and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come. Go to Calneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath, and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are you any better than those kingdoms?"

When God's leaders backslide the Lord says they are no different than the pagans. In fact when a leader or a believer backslides they often end up in a worse state spiritually than the unsaved.

Well the Prophet Amos continues, "You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror." You who lead Israel neglect to warn people of the coming judgment and by doing this actually hasten the day when the reign of terror is unleashed upon you by the

Babylonians! "You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments."

If ever there was a picture of the spiritual state of the Western Church today Amos has described it. Look at the faith prosperity, kingdom now and purpose driven Churches that are filled with luxurious living, ease and music to dazzles the senses! But Amos continues, "You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph." In most if not in every modern mega church the people are rising up to laugh and to have a good time. The preachers tickle the ears of their congregations with visions, dreams and concepts that are the product of their own imaginations and not from the Spirit of God. Multitudes of leaders in the Church no longer grieve over its unbiblical practices and its backslidden condition. Instead people are having a party. Watch Benny Hinn on the Internet, See Rodney Howard Browne with his hilarious hysterics. See Pastors rolling on the floor and their congregation members shaking and writhing along with them. No wonder the world laughs and sees the whole thing as a con job! Well God says through Amos, "Therefore you (the leaders) will be among the first to go into exile, your feasting and lounging will end." (Amos 6:1-7) God always holds the leaders accountable for what they do to the people of God.

(Vs 12) *"The vine is dried up."* The Church has no real and genuine spiritual power to see people saved. *"The fig tree is withered."* Israel is spiritually bankrupt and at the mercy of the nations seeking to divide up their land. *"The pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree-all the trees of the field-are dried up."* Every nation is spiritually famished for the hearing of God's Word as millions go to hell every day and, *"surely the joy of mankind is withered away."*

Joyless people have no strength when they are faced with the brevity that life can

bring. Alcohol and drugs are mere sedatives but the problems are still there in the morning!

Today in this present world there is very little real joy and satisfaction. People may laugh and look happy on the outside but inwardly they are filled with distress and anxiety. There is the constant threat of terrorism, increasing earthquakes, new diseases resistant to drugs, pollution of the water and preservatives in food. There is an epidemic of drug taking and alcohol, child abuse, aborted babies and ethnic tension and violence.

Really what is there to be happy about in this present world. The only ones who are truly satisfied and content are those who know and rely upon the joy and the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord will be your strength (Nehemiah 8:4) The only ones who have a deep and settled peace are those who are looking for that eternal city whose foundation and maker is God. They are longing to be clothed with their heavenly bodies and to reign over the nations in the millennial kingdom with Jesus their beloved Messiah, Savior and Lord. What do they really care about success and wealth in this life for all of it will fade like the grass which is here today and is gone tomorrow, indeed, "the grass withers and the flowers fade but the Word of our God will stand forever!"

Conclusion

God has the answer. It is found in one person alone and that is the Lord Jesus Christ the delight and the strength of His people. He is coming back! And things are not going to get better but worse. Indeed the whole world will be in an advanced state of spiritual decay and on the verge of annihilation when Jesus comes back. "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:22-23)

Only the Second Coming of Christ will solve all of the problems in the world. Are you ready to meet Him? Will you be taken up to meet Him in the air at His coming or be left behind to experience the wrath of God?

Man's greatest need is to obtain righteousness before a just and Holy God. This is beyond any one of us as we have violated and rebelled against the commandments of God and stand condemned to hell and the lake of fire. That is the bad news. However there is good news and it is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ and in no one else.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only way of Salvation. As the scripture says, "There is salvation in no one else and there is no name given under heaven among men by which they must be saved!"(Acts 4:12)

Religion cannot save you. Buddah cannot save you. Vishna cannot save you. Confucius cannot save you. Mohammed cannot save you because they are all dead! There is only one man who came back from the dead and lives forever and ever and that is the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself said, "I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes unto the Father except through Me."(John 14:6)

There is only one who shed His blood to reconcile us to God and to put away our sins. Only His blood and righteousness appropriated and received by faith can save you from the coming wrath. The blood of Jesus Christ has not only fully and completely atoned for your sins but has the power to cleanse you from all and every sin. There is only one sin that cannot be forgiven and that is the rejection of Jesus Christ and God's Salvation found only in Him alone.

Indeed the Bible says that, "If we walk in the light (God's Word) as He (God) is in the light the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," and again it says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse to us from all unrighteousness."

Think of it when you lay your head on your pillow this night to sleep and to know that all of your sins are forgiven! If you do not wake up in the morning then you will be absent from the body but present with the Lord. However, what if you go to sleep tonight unsaved and unforgiven? God could not let you into heaven because you would still be in your sins and there is only one other place you could go to and that would be hell. If God allowed people still enslaved to sin to enter heaven then it would become as spiritually defiled and contaminated as this present world so God has to confine to hell the unsaved that die in their sins.

Hell is a prison whose inmates are kept there destined for the lake of fire! Hell is real and don't be fooled by Post Modernism and those Church leaders today like Brian McLaren intimating that hell is not necessarily a real place or like John Stott implying that annihilation is an alternative after death. The Bible clearly tells us that this is not the case! One of the reasons Jesus died was to provide a way for men and women to escape the terrors of hell and the lake of fire!

The Bible says that the shed blood of Jesus is the only basis upon which anyone can be acquitted of all offences and violations of His laws and commandments. As the God's Word says, "Since we have been justified (declared to be innocent, even though we are guilty) by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Again the Word of God says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of His grace (Unmerited favor)

Before God can save you from your sin and its consequences you must be willing to repent and to make Jesus Lord over your whole way of life. To repent means to turn from a Christ hating, Christ rejecting life and to embrace a Christ loving, Christ accepting way of life! Indeed God Himself requires that you first repent. "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn

to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.”(Isaiah 55:6-7)

The Bible also says, “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the scripture says, “Everyone

who trusts in Him will never be put to shame...for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”(Romans10: 9-11,13)

We leave this first study with a scene of utter desolation with a world decimated and ravaged by demonic forces. At this time God calls His people to repent and that will be the subject of the next study entitled, “The Call to Repent.”

BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

* For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ *

